The Student's Series of English Classics

HANDY EDITION

COLERIDGE'S THE ANCIENT MARINER
LOWELL'S THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL
BURNS' THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

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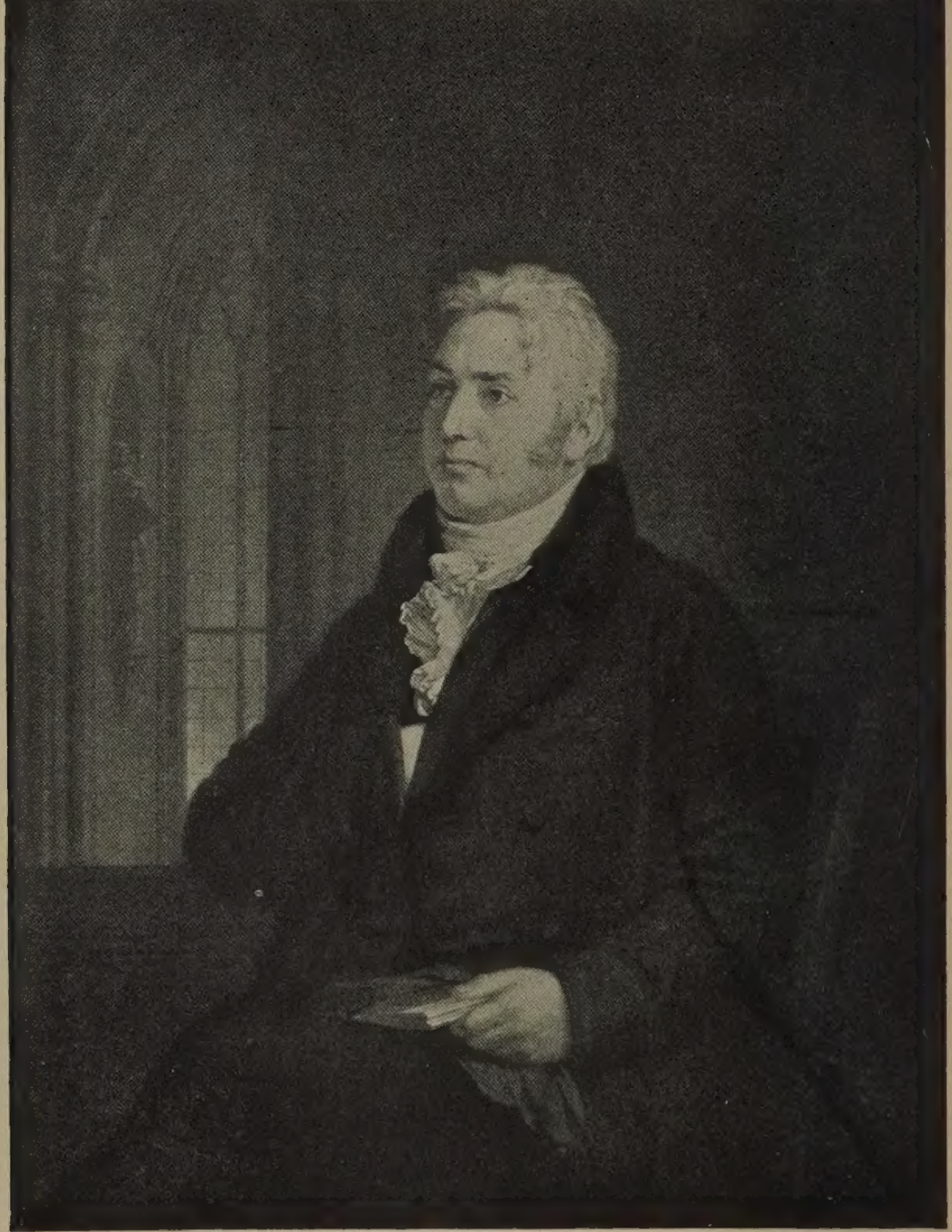

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S. T. Coleridge

The Students' Series of English Classics.

COLERIDGE'S ANCIENT MARINER.

EDITED BY
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"Nothing can be truer than fairy wisdom. It is as true as sunbeams."
DOUGLAS JERROLD.

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PREFACE.

On the list of entrance requirements in English literature, as recently adopted by the Association of New England Colleges, stands Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." The selection is a happy one, for the reason that the poem, exquisite in melody and imagery, and abounding in nature-pictures equally remarkable for wide range and delicate accuracy, nevertheless produces at first so vivid an impression of spectral horror as to blind the casual reader to its rare poetic grace and charm. But as the poem is dwelt upon in the class-room, the student being brought to realize the marvellous succession of moonlight, ocean scenes, then the agonies of that disordered soul and the frightfulness of the images reflected from its guilty consciousness will but serve to throw into fairer contrast the blessedness of the spirit restored to the life of love, and the peaceful beauty of the universe as beheld by eyes purged from selfishness and sin.

Coleridge at his best is so purely poetical that he is an especially valuable author for class-room use, his mastery of diction, melody and figure tending to culti-

vate in the student a high poetic standard. Yet Coleridge at his best could be comprehended within the limits of a very thin volume. If it should be desired to extend the study of Coleridge beyond the "Ancient Mariner," the finest of his other poems might be brought before the class by recitations or readings. Such poems are "Christabel," "Genevieve," "Kubla Khan," "Ballad of the Dark Ladie," "France," "Fears in Solitude," "The Eolian Harp," "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," "The Foster Mother's Tale," "Sonnet to Burke," "Answer to a Child's Question," "Hymn before Sunrise," "The Lime Tree Bower My Prison," "The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem," "Frost at Midnight," "Dejection," "Ode to Tranquillity," "Lines to W. L.," "The Pains of Sleep," "The Knight's Tomb," "Youth and Age," "Fancy in Nubibus," the bird song in "Zapolya," the Miserere in "Remorse," and the famous original passage upon "The fair humanities of old religion" in "The Piccolomini."

KATHARINE LEE BATES.

WELLESLEY COLLEGE,
May, 1889.

COLERIDGE.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

(1772-1834.)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, born in Devonshire, England, Oct. 21, 1772, was the youngest of thirteen children. His father was a clergyman, schoolmaster, and bookworm, holding the two positions of vicar of Ottery St. Mary and master of Henry VIII.'s Free Grammar School in the same parish. Coleridge has recorded of his mother that she was, as doubtless she had need to be, "an admirable economist." His childish love, however, seems to have gone out less to her, the Martha "careful and troubled about many things," than to the absent-minded, unworldly old vicar, who is remembered for his "Critical Latin Grammar," wherein he proposed a change in the names of the cases, designating the ablative, for example, as "the quare-quale-quidditive case;" and also for the Hebrew quotations, which, copiously besprinkled throughout his sermons, he used to recommend to the awe-stricken hearts of his rustic congregation, as "the immediate language of the Holy Ghost." "The truth is," says Coleridge, "my father was not a first-rate genius; he was, however, a first-rate Christian, which is much better."

In this crowded vicarage the little poet led, as he tells us, a solitary life. "I took no pleasure in boyish sports, but read incessantly. I read through all gilt-cover little books that could be had at that time, and likewise all the uncovered tales of Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giant-killer, and the like. And I used to lie by the wall and mope, and my spirits used to come upon me suddenly, and in a flood; and then I was accustomed to run up and down the churchyard, and act over again all I had been reading on the docks, the nettles, and the rank grass . . . . I never played except by myself, and then only acted over what I had been reading or fancying, or half one, half the other; with a stick cutting down weeds and nettles, as one of the 'Seven champions of Christendom.' Alas! I had all the simplicity, all the docility of the little child, but none of the child's habits. I never thought as a child, never had the language of a child."

Before the boy was nine years old, occurred the sudden death of his father. Money, never abundant in this household, was now scarcer than ever, and the dreamy, precocious child must needs be abruptly pushed out of the home shelter into the rough life of a London Charity School. Through the exertions of one of his father's old pupils, an eminent judge of the neighborhood, Coleridge obtained admission to Christ's Hospital and was made a Blue-Coat Boy. Here among the Blue-Coats he passed the next eight years of his life, still lonely, for all his six hundred schoolfellows, and rapt in strange imaginings. "My talents and superiority," he says, "made me forever at the head in my routine of study,

though utterly without the desire to be so; without a spark of ambition; and as to emulation, it had no meaning for me; but the difference between me and my form-fellows, in our lessons and exercises, bore no proportion to the measureless difference between me and them in the wide, wild wilderness of useless, unarranged book knowledge and book thoughts." It is related that the visionary student, who seems to have been addicted to at least one boyish pastime, delighting on summer holidays in the bathing excursions to a neighboring stream, was once walking down the Strand, throwing out his arms continually, as if in the act of swimming. A stranger, with whose person his hand came in contact, taking the lad for a pickpocket, seized him, with the exclamation: "What, so young and so wicked!" — "I am not a pickpocket," pleaded Coleridge, "I only thought I was Leander swimming the Hellespont." The astonished stranger, finding his thief turn genius, procured for him, by way of apology, free access to a circulating library.

"Here," writes Coleridge, "I read through the catalogue, folios and all, whether I understood them, or did not understand them, running all risks in skulking out to get the two volumes which I was entitled to have daily. Conceive what I must have been at fourteen; I was in a continual low fever. My whole being was, with eyes closed to every object of present sense, to crumple myself up in a sunny corner, and read, read, read — fancying myself on Robinson Crusoe's island, finding a mountain of plum-cake, and making a room for myself, and then eating it into the shapes of tables

and chairs—hunger and fancy!" Poor little Blue Coat! Those feasts of books were the only feasts he knew in Christ's Hospital. It required a flight of fancy indeed for the half-starved orphan to imagine a plum-cake. For at that time, in the words which Coleridge himself used years after: "The portion of food to the Blue-Coats was cruelly insufficient for those who had no friends to supply them." Lamb, his schoolfellow, then and always Coleridge's "gentle-hearted Charles," had relatives in town, and so fared better; but the whimsical essayist has given, in the sketch entitled "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago," a sympathetic picture of his less fortunate friend's experience.

Yet Coleridge's recollections of his school days were not all unhappy. To an eager intellect like his, the field of knowledge was itself delectable land. Under the guidance of this same choleric head master, the "rabid pedant" at whom Lamb pokes such irresistible fun, Coleridge ranged widely over Greek, Latin, and English literature. "At school (Christ's Hospital)," he says, in his *Biographia Literaria*, "I enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a very sensible, though at the same time a very severe master, the Reverend James Bowyer. He early moulded my taste to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero; of Homer and Theocritus to Virgil; and again of Virgil to Ovid. . . . At the same time that we were studying the Greek tragic poets, he made us read Shakspeare and Milton as lessons; and they were the lessons, too, which required most time and trouble to *bring up*, so as to

escape his censure. I learned from him, that poetry, even that of the loftiest and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more and more fugitive causes. 'In the truly great poets,' he would say, 'there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word.'" But it was not to the study of poetry that the young student gave himself up with freest abandon. "At a very premature age," Coleridge has recorded, "even before my fifteenth year, I had bewildered myself in metaphysics, and in theological controversy. Nothing else pleased me. History and particular facts lost all interest in my mind. . . . Poetry itself, yea, novel and romance, became insipid to me."

In his nineteenth year, Coleridge wrote a poetic farewell, not without tenderness, to Christ's Hospital; and entered at Jesus College, Cambridge, just a month after Wordsworth, having taken the bachelor's degree, had quitted the university. Of Coleridge's career at Cambridge, one of his college mates writes: "Coleridge was very studious, but his reading was desultory and capricious. He took little exercise merely for the sake of exercise: but he was ready at any time to unbend his mind in conversation; and, for the sake of this, his room was a constant rendezvous of conversation-loving friends, — I will not call them loungers, for they did not call to kill time, but to enjoy it. What evenings have I spent in those rooms! What little suppers, or *sizings*,

as they were called, have I enjoyed; when Æschylus, and Plato, and Thucydides were pushed aside, with a pile of lexicons and the like, to discuss the pamphlets of the day. Ever and anon a pamphlet issued from the pen of Burke. There was no need of having the book before us; Coleridge had read it in the morning, and in the evening he would repeat whole pages *verbatim*."

But brilliant as these occasional feats of memory might be, phenomenal though his natural gifts of understanding and imagination were, the irresolution and lack of practical energy, which so deeply marred the poet's later life, had already begun their injurious work with him. Even at Christ's Hospital, drunken with metaphysics, he had turned impatiently away from the mathematics and the other exact sciences, the colder and stricter discipline which these exert over the mental faculties being distasteful to him; and at Cambridge, although he gained a gold medal for a Greek ode, he seems to have neglected the *minutiæ* of classic scholarship, for we find him more than once an unsuccessful candidate for college honors. Early in the third year of his Cambridge residence, in debt and despondent, he yielded to a reckless impulse, and took coach for London. There he drifted about for a few days, spent his scanty stock of money, waxed hungry and, a recruiting advertisement catching his eye, enlisted off-hand, the most unsoldierly young Englishman that ever wore the scarlet, as a private in the 15th Light Dragoons. "Being at a loss, when suddenly asked my name," he afterwards wrote to a friend, "I answered, *Cumberback*, and verily, my habits were so little eques-

trian, that my horse, I doubt not, was of that opinion." For four months Coleridge served his country under arms as best he might, his comrades helping the awkward recruit about the grooming of his horse, and like non-scholastic duties; while he repaid these services by writing letters for them to their wives and sweethearts. But the words, "*Eheu, quam infortuni miserrimum est fuisse felicem,*" inscribed in pencil on the stable wall under his saddle, attracted the notice of an officer. The upshot was that Coleridge, bought off with some difficulty by his friends, returned in April to Cambridge, where he remained only until the summer vacation. Then, diverted from college interests by his large enthusiasms for political and social reform, and shut off from all chance of college preferment by his profession of the Unitarian faith, he severed his connection with the University without taking a degree.

The year in which the restless poet thus broke free from academic life was 1794. For four years past all Europe had been shaken to its centre by the great event of modern history. The French Revolution, with its impetuous rush, had been sweeping all the frank and generous young hearts of England away from traditional moorings on the wild, glad dream of universal liberty, equality, and brotherhood.

> "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very Heaven."

Coleridge shared to the full the leaping hope, the delirious joy, the pure ideal of the hour. The horrors of the

Revolution daunted him no more than they did Wordsworth; for the blasphemy and carnage both our poets deemed but the cloud before the daybreak, the transient evils incident to the holy triumph of Freedom. In the blood-stained leaders of the mob they sought to discern patriots, philosophers, philanthropists.

"Elate we looked
Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
And continence of mind, and sense of right,
Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife."

And when England arrayed herself with the enemies of France; when

"To whelm the disenchanted nation,
Like fiends embattled by a wizard's wand,
The monarchs marched in evil day,
And Britain joined the dire array,"

Coleridge, like Wordsworth, in the hot grief and indignation of a youthful spirit, withdrew his sympathies from his native land.

"Though dear her shores and circling ocean,
Though many friendships, many youthful loves,
Had swoln the patriot emotion,
And flung a magic light o'er all her hills and groves,
Yet still my voice, unaltered, sang defeat
To all that braved the tyrant-quelling lance,
And shame, too long delayed, and vain retreat.
For ne'er, O Liberty, with partial aim,
I dimmed thy light, or damped thy holy flame;
But blessed the pæans of delivered France,
And hung my head, and wept at Britain's name."

Breaking away from the routine of University life in such mood as this, Coleridge almost immediately fell in with the poet Southey, like himself, at this time, Unitarian in religion, and ardently democratic in politics. These two young dreamers speedily gave themselves up to architecture of that unprofessional kind known as air-castle building. They proposed to establish in America, on the banks of the Susquehanna, — a location chosen because of the resonant name of the river, — a social community under the title of Pantisocracy. The Adams in this earthly paradise were to till the soil, the Eves were to perform the household tasks; there was to be an abundance of leisure for social intercourse, for reading of books, and writing of poems; all things were to be held in common, and selfishness was to be unknown. But while Coleridge and Southey were maturing the details of this plan at Bristol, they fell in love with two sisters resident there; and in the fall of 1795, at the age of twenty-three, Coleridge, with no visible means of support, was married to Sarah Fricker. We hear little more of the project

> "The tinkling team to drive
> O'er peaceful Freedom's undivided vale."

The young husband and wife cast in their lot with unenlightened England; where not even bread was held in common, but it behooved every man to win for himself and his what portion of the loaf he could. And here began for Coleridge a painful and a losing struggle. To tell what he did is a brief matter, but to tell what he proposed and intended to do would fill many pages.

First he tried his hand at lecturing, then at the publication of a weekly miscellany, *The Watchman*. For his third venture he issued a volume of "Juvenile Poems," receiving in compensation thirty guineas. These poems, some fifty in number, many of them dating from undergraduate days, represent rather the byplay of Coleridge's pen than any sustained exertion of his genius; and yet, though more often eloquent and graceful than highly imaginative, these youthful poems, above and beyond their wealth of diction, ease of rhythm, breadth of thought and dignity of tone, bear upon them that indefinable something which we recognize as the pure poetic impress. Meanwhile the poet had turned preacher and was delivering impassioned discourses, usually upon the political topics of the time, in the Unitarian chapels about Bristol. Hazlitt thus records his impressions on hearing Coleridge preach, —

"As he gave out his text, 'He departed again into a mountain, *himself alone*,' his voice rose 'like a stream of rich, distilled perfumes;' and when he came to the two last words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. . . . The preacher then launched into his subject, like an eagle dallying with the wind. . . . For myself, I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres."

Seventeen hundred and ninety-six was ushered out by Coleridge with his "Ode to the Departing Year." With

1797 dawned the *annus mirabilis* of his genius. His poetic activity, stimulated by his new friendship with Wordsworth, touched its zenith then. It was the year of the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and "Christabel;" of "Love," and the "Ode to France;" of "Remorse," and "Kubla Khan." His poet comrade,

> "Friend of the wise and teacher of the good,"

has sketched us one last picture of a blithe-hearted Coleridge.

> "That summer, under whose indulgent skies
> Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
> Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan combs,
> Thou, in bewitching words, with happy heart,
> Didst chant the vision of that Ancient Man,
> The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
> Didst utter of the lady Christabel."

From these joyous rambles sprang a rich poetic harvest. "The thought," says Coleridge, "suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed, of two sorts. In the one the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the interest aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves." Thus originated

the *Lyrical Ballads*, a joint volume of poems, prepared in accordance with this idea, save that the division of labor proved to be unequal, Wordsworth contributing nearly five times as many poems as his fitful companion. This little book appeared in the spring of 1798, its publication, though productive at the time of small fame and less profit to the brother authors, marking an epoch in the history of English poetry. In the autumn of this same year, the two poets, with Wordsworth's sister Dorothy, took a trip to Germany, the poetic outcome being, for Coleridge, his masterly translation of Schiller's "Wallenstein." But over the onward path of the young poet, still in the radiant sunrise of his genius, the menacing clouds had gathered; and the annals of his later life are but "the tragic story of a high endowment with an insufficient will."

The troubles that were fast closing about Coleridge, to stifle his exquisite song, sprang mainly from two sources: the overthrow of his early, passionate faith in a dawning era of liberty and love, and the slavery of the opium habit. For to the young poets of England, who had thrown the purest enthusiasm of their hearts into the French Revolution, came bitter disappointment and paralyzing sorrow. When the France in whom they had trusted, once freed from her own tyrants, exchanged her pledges of love for deeds of hate, her theories of universal brotherhood for acts of selfish injustice, her psalms to the Goddess of Liberty for the battle-cry raised against the free mountains of Switzerland; when England herself was threatened with invasion; when the

oppressed became the oppressor; when the Republic passed into the Empire; when Napoleon's wars of conquest drenched Europe with blood; — then it was that, bewildered, betrayed, despairing of humanity, liberals turned conservatives, lovers of the race were driven back on the narrower virtue of patriotism and, for visions of the Golden Age and inspired songs to Freedom, came disbelief in visions, and loss of the power to sing. Wordsworth's stronger nature, on which the shock of disillusion fell at first with crushing force, rose from the blow chastened and serene, though never the same again. Henceforth he cared little for popular movements, trusted little in political agitations, but dwelt apart from cities, among the rustic poor, regaining his faith in mankind as he lingered in cottage doorways and heard, —

> "From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
> Replete with honor."

His wounded heart found healing in the dear, familiar touch of nature; and his broken hopes for society were re-united in a deeper reverence for humanity. The ideal that made the glory of his youth was darkened; but, year by year, a calm-thoughted philosopher, he wrought steadily at his art, presenting his life to God as

> "An oblation of divine tranquillity;"

and bequeathing to his fellow-men a noble body of poetry, instinct with

> "Love and hope and faith's transcendent dower."

But with the death of his aspiration for man, died the poet-life of Coleridge. "For Coleridge," says a keen-sighted critic, "wanted will; and with will, perseverance and continuance. Nothing gave his will force but high-pitched enthusiasm; and with its death within him, with the perishing of his youthful dream, the enduring energy of life visited him no more. And this is specially true of him as Poet. Almost all his best poetic work is coincident with the Revolution; afterwards, everything is incomplete."

Yet it is possible that the poetic power, even after this benumbing shock, might yet have rallied, had not Coleridge suffered himself to become enslaved by the opium-habit.

> "Sickness, 'tis true,
> Whole years of weary days, besieged him close,
> Even to the gates and inlets of his life:"

but the remedy was worse than the disease. Recognizing to the full the shame and misery entailed upon him by this bondage, which made lethargy of his days and torture of his nights, he nevertheless lacked the manliness to break his chain.

> "Sad lot, to have no hope! Though lowly kneeling
> He fain would frame a prayer within his breast,
> Would fain entreat for some sweet breath of healing,
> That his sick body might have ease and rest;
> He strove in vain! the dull sighs from his chest
> Against his will the stifling load revealing,
> Though nature forced; though like some captive guest,
> Some royal prisoner at his conqueror's feast,
> An alien's restless mood but half concealing,

The sternness on his gentle brow confessed
Sickness within and miserable feeling;
Though obscure pangs made curses of his dreams,
And dreaded sleep, each night repelled in vain,
Each night was scattered by its own loud screams;
Yet never could his heart command, though fain,
One deep full wish to be no more in pain."

The laudanum fostered his natural indolence and procrastination. Bitterly he reproached himself, but his self-rebukings did not lead to amendment.

"To me hath Heaven with bounteous hand assign'd
Energic reason and a shaping mind,
The daring ken of truth, the patriot's part,
And pity's sigh, that breathes the gentle heart —
Sloth-jaundiced all! and from my graspless hand
Drop friendship's precious pearls, like hour-glass sand."

And beneath one of his unfinished poems he wrote these words of saddest significance, —

"*Carmen reliquum in futurum tempus relegatum.* To-morrow! and To-morrow! and To-morrow!" —

It was not the least of Coleridge's sufferings that he could not suffer alone. To read the record of his Herculean projects and frail accomplishment, is to pity, not only him, but his wife and children. Domestic care, financial responsibility, fretted and harassed the man of contemplation; he struggled against the stream for a little, and then drifted with the current, lamenting, but no longer resisting. In his earlier poems we have frequent and tender allusions to his bride, and passages of purest beauty concerning his infant child. But he has

not been one year married before his spirit is sorely irked by the necessity for regular labor with his pen, to meet the expenses of his little household. To a friend he writes: "I am forced to write for bread — write the flights of poetic enthusiasm, when every minute I am hearing a groan from my wife. Groans, and complaints, and sickness. The present hour I am in a quickset hedge of embarrassments, and, whichever way I turn, a thorn runs into me. The future is cloud and thick darkness. Poverty, perhaps, and the thin faces of them that want bread looking up to me! Nor is this all. My happiest moments for composition are broken in upon by the reflection that I must make haste. 'I am too late!' 'I am already months behind!' 'I have received my pay beforehand.' O wayward and desultory spirit of Genius, ill canst thou brook a taskmaster!"

The odds were too heavily against him, restless, irresolute, unreliable as he was. "The courage necessary for him, above all things, had been denied this man," says Carlyle. "His life, with such ray of the empyrean in it, was great and terrible to him, and he had not valiantly grappled with it; he had fled from it, sought refuge in vague day-dreams, hollow compromises, in opium, in theosophic metaphysics. Harsh pain, danger, necessity, slavish, harnessed toil, were of all things abhorrent to him. And so the empyrean element, lying smothered under the terrene, and yet inextinguishable there, made sad writhings. For pain, danger, difficulty, steady slaving toil, and other highly disagreeable behests of destiny, shall in no wise be shirked by any brightest mortal that

will approve himself loyal to his mission in this world; nay, precisely the higher he is, the deeper will be the disagreeableness and the detestability, to flesh and blood, of the tasks laid on him, and the heavier, too, and more tragic, his penalties if he neglects them."

Never was erring poet blessed with more patient and more generous friends. Southey's home afforded a refuge to Mrs. Coleridge and the children. The Wordsworths opened their doors to him. De Quincey gave him money. Many another friend did the same, sometimes spontaneously, more often in response to Coleridge's begging letters. For the last eighteen years of his life the unthrifty, humiliated poet was kindly cared for in the family of a Dr. Gilman.

"It is no secret," says Leigh Hunt, "that Coleridge lived in the Grove at Highgate with a friendly family, who had sense and kindness enough to know that they did themselves honor by looking after the comfort of such a man. His room looked upon a delicious prospect of wood and meadow, with colored gardens under the window, like an embroidery to the mantle. I thought, when I first saw it, that he had taken up his dwelling-place like an abbot. Here he cultivated his flowers, and had a set of birds for his pensioners, who came to breakfast with him. He might have been seen taking his daily stroll up and down, with his black coat and white locks, and a book in his hand; and was a great acquaintance of the little children."

In this peaceful retreat, enabled at last, by the aid of his friendly physician, to escape in some degree from the

tyranny of opium, Coleridge seemed to begin life anew; but it was life as a philosopher, now, no longer as a poet. Fourteen years before this retirement to Highgate, Coleridge himself had mournfully recorded the suspension of his poetic faculty.

"There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness;
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits and foliage not my own seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth,
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what Nature gave me at my birth, —
My shaping spirit of imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can,
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man, —
This was my sole resource, my only plan,
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul."

The "shaping spirit of imagination" did not return to him, in this quiet evening of his stormy day; but his pen was industrious, especially in lines of literary criticism and of religious philosophy. The list of his prose works comprises "The Friend," "Two Lay Sermons," "Biographia Literaria," "Aids to Reflection," "Church and State," "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit," and "Literary Remains." Besides these, he left behind a mass of notes and correspondence, and a volume has been

made of his "Table-talk." These works, though unequal in merit, all reveal the presence of what De Quincey has styled "the largest and most spacious intellect, the subtlest and the most comprehensive, in my judgment, that has yet existed amongst men."

As a Shakspearian critic, Coleridge is unsurpassed in English letters. As a religious philosopher, he exerted a powerful influence over his own and the succeeding generation, being the first to introduce the German speculations into English theology. Abandoning his Unitarianism, he found place again within the Established Church, and notwithstanding his familiarity with the writings of the most able sceptics of France and Germany, taught a distinctively Christian philosophy.

Coleridge's wonderful flow of speech attracted many disciples to Highgate; his later years knew honor and reverence, and the faithful friends of his youth loved him to the end. Charles Lamb, indeed, never recovered from the shock of his old schoolfellow's death, which occurred in 1834, and survived him but a short time. Wordsworth laments the two friends together.

"Nor has the rolling year twice measured
From sign to sign its steadfast course,
Since every mortal power of Coleridge
Was frozen at its marvellous source.

"The rapt one, of the godlike forehead,
The heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth;
And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,
Has vanished from his lonely hearth."

For Wordsworth, like Scott and all that shining group of poets who were Coleridge's contemporaries, stood awe-stricken before the miraculous imagination which, in the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," but gave forth one flash of its splendor. After that twenty-fifth year of high achievement, the over-burdened life went astray in sad, ignoble confusions; but at last it was the poet who lay dying. "I am dying," he said, "but without expectation of a speedy release. Is it not strange that very recently bygone images, and scenes of early life, have stolen into my mind, like breezes blown from the spice-islands of Youth and Hope, — those two realities of this phantom world?"

To Coleridge these might well seem the only realities; for in the days of youth and hope alone had he been true to his own reality, — his one rightful life as poet. In the presence of these words his later years, their errors and their sufferings, even their labors, fade away; and we know Coleridge once again as the "heaven-eyed" youth who roamed with Wordsworth over the Quantock Hills, chanting his magical, dreamland ballads, "exquisitely wild," to the music of his own inspired heart.

PEN PICTURES OF COLERIDGE.

COME back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee — the dark pillar not yet turned — Samuel Taylor Coleridge — Logician, Metaphysician, Bard! — How have I seen the casual passer through the cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young Mirandula), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar — while the walls of the old Gray Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy!* — CHARLES LAMB.

You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge. He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every little trifle. At first, I thought him very plain, that is, for about three minutes; he is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes, you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark but gray; such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind: it has more of the poet's eye in

a fine frenzy rolling than I ever witnessed. He has fine, dark eyebrows and an overhanging forehead. — DOROTHY WORDSWORTH.

The noticeable man with large gray eyes. — WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

In height, he might seem to be about five feet eight (he was, in reality, about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height); his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically style fair, because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large and soft in their expression; and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess, which mixed with their light, that I recognized my object. This was Coleridge. — THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

Coleridge was as little fitted for action as Lamb, but on a different account. His person was of a good height, but as sluggish and solid as the other's was light and active. He had, perhaps, suffered it to look old before its time, for want of exercise. His hair was white at fifty; and, as he generally dressed in black, and had a very tranquil demeanor, his appearance was gentlemanly, and for several years before his death was reverend. Nevertheless, there was something invincibly young in the look of his face. It was round and fresh colored, with agreeable features, and an open, indolent, good-natured mouth. This boy-like expression was very becoming in one who dreamed and speculated as he did when he was really a boy, and who passed his life apart from the rest of the world with a book and his flowers. His forehead was prodigious, a great piece of placid marble; and his fine eyes, in which all the activity of his mind seemed to concentrate,

moved under it with a sprightly ease, as if it was pastime to him to carry all that thought. — LEIGH HUNT.

Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle; attracting toward him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. His express contributions to poetry, philosophy, or any specific province of human literature or enlightenment, had been small and sadly intermittent; but he had, especially among young inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character. He was thought to hold, he alone in England, the key of German and other transcendentalisms; knew the sublime secret of believing by "the reason" what "the understanding" had been obliged to fling out as incredible; and could still, after Hume and Voltaire had done their best and worst with him, profess himself an orthodox Christian, and say and print to the Church of England, with its singular old rubrics and surplices at Allhallowtide, *Esto perpetua*. A sublime man; who, alone in those dark days, had saved his crown of spiritual manhood; escaping from the black materialisms, and revolutionary deluges, with "God, Freedom, Immortality," still his: a king of men. The practical intellects of the world did not much heed him, or carelessly reckoned him a metaphysical dreamer: but to the rising spirits of the young generation, he had this dusky, sublime character; and sat there as a kind of *Magus*, girt in mystery and enigma; his Dodona oak grove (Mr. Gilman's house at Highgate) whispering strange things, uncertain whether oracles or jargon.

. . . . .

The good man, he was now getting old, towards sixty, perhaps; and gave you the idea of a life that had been full of

sufferings; a life heavy-laden, half-vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment. Brow and head were round, and of massive weight, but the face was flabby and irresolute. The deep eyes, of a light hazel, were as full of sorrow as of inspiration; confused pain looked mildly from them, as in a kind of mild astonishment. The whole figure and air, good and amiable otherwise, might be called flabby and irresolute; expressive of weakness under possibility of strength. He hung loosely on his limbs, with knees bent, and stooping attitude; in walking, he rather shuffled than decisively stepped; and a lady once remarked, he never could fix which side of the garden-walk would suit him best, but continually shifted, in corkscrew fashion, and kept trying both. A heavy-laden, high-aspiring, and surely much-suffering man. His voice, naturally soft and good, had contracted itself into a plaintive snuffle and singsong; he spoke as if preaching, you would have said, preaching earnestly and also hopelessly the weightiest things. I still recollect his "object" and "subject," terms of continual recurrence in the Kantean province; and how he sung and snuffled them into "om-m-mject" and "sum-m-mject" with a kind of solemn shake or quaver, as he rolled along. No talk, in his century or in any other, could be more surprising. — THOMAS CARLYLE.

To pass an entire day with Coleridge was a marvellous change, indeed [from the talk of daily life]. It was a Sabbath past expression, deep, and tranquil, and serene. You came to a man who had travelled in many countries, and in critical times; who had seen and felt the world in most of its ranks, and in many of its vicissitudes and weaknesses; one to whom all literature and art were absolutely subject; and to whom, with a reasonable allowance as to technical details,

all science was, in a most extraordinary degree, familiar. Throughout a long-drawn summer's day, would this man talk to you in low, equable, but clear and musical tones, concerning things human and divine; marshalling all history, harmonizing all experiment, probing the depths of your consciousness, and revealing visions of glory and terror to the imagination; but pouring, withal, such floods of light upon the mind that you might for a season, like Paul, become blind in the very act of conversion. And this he would do without so much as one allusion to himself, without a word of reflection upon others, save when any given art fell naturally in the way of his discourse; without one anecdote that was not proof and illustration of a previous position; gratifying no passion, indulging no caprice, but, with a calm mastery over your soul, leading you onward and onward forever through a thousand windings, yet with no pause, to some magnificent point in which, as in a focus, all the parti-colored rays of his discourse should converge in light. In all these, he was, in truth, your teacher and guide; but, in a little while, you might forget that he was other than a fellow-student and the companion of your way, so playful was his manner, so simple his language, so affectionate the glance of his eye! — NELSON COLERIDGE.

Visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts, as angels do
Their wings, with cadence up the blue.
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

HINTS ON THE HANDLING OF A POEM

"Poetry," says Coleridge, "is the blossom and the fragrance of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language."

Essentially a poem cannot be taught. The student learns his deepest lesson from the poet and from no other. A teacher does well to be on his guard, lest he obtrude his own personality between the two. It is the poet himself, who, arresting the attention by song, holding it by vision after vision, can best impart to the young intellect the truth he has to tell, can alone inspire in the young heart a sympathetic passion for that truth. The function of the teacher, in dealing with any particular poem, is, first and foremost, to help the student fix his attention upon it. This can usually be done by questioning, better than in any other way. A running fire of questions, searching, varied, stimulates the mental activity, pricks into life the sluggish perceptions, gives form and color to those poem-pictures which are often so dimly and vaguely reproduced by the untutored imagination; and thus securing the vivid presentment of the scene, the clear comprehension of the thought, does away with the intellectual barrier, and brings the heart of the student into free contact with the glowing heart

of the poet. Since definite knowledge is a requisite basis for true sympathy, such questions would relate in part to the meaning of terms and phrases employed; and rigid must be the will of that teacher who is not sometimes tempted aside from his main object by the "fossil poetry" of individual words, and led to inquire into the secrets of their origin and growth; yet the study of literature is more than philology. Such questions might relate, in part, to the structure of sentences; the significance of allusions, geographical, historical, mythological; the value of an illustration; the force of an argument; the development of a thought; — all this to insure a firm intellectual grasp of the subject-matter. Yet this done, the half has not been done. To understand the poet's message is one thing; to feel it, know it, and reach out beyond it toward the purer message he suggests, but has not words to utter, is another. Indeed, care should constantly be taken that these more superficial questions be kept in the background and not suffered to distract the student's mind from the poetic essence. For the study of literature must not be mistaken for the study of syntax, geography, history, mythology or logic. All questions that awaken the imagination and enable it to glorify the printed words into such clear-colored visions as dazzled the "mind's eye" of the poet while he wrote are of peculiar value. Questions that quicken the ear to the music of the poet's verse, and all other questions that render the student aware of poetic artifice, responsive to poetic effects, indirectly serve to deepen the central impression of the poem;

since these very melodies and rhetorical devices are not idle ornament, but the studied emphasis of the poet's word. Questions that lead the student to recognize and define in himself the emotions aroused by one passage or another in the poem, questions that call forth an attempt to supply missing links in the chain of events, questions that carry the reason and imagination forward on the lines suggested by the poet, all tend to mould the student's mood into sympathy with that higher mood, sensitive, eager, impassioned, in which the singer first conceived his song.

The question-method may be well supplemented by topical recitation, class discussion, citation of parallel passages, comparison with kindred poems and, under due precautions, the reading of criticisms. The committing a poem to memory, that its virtue may gradually distil into the mind and become a force in the unconscious life, is most desirable wherever it is possible to train the student to learn poetry by heart and not by rote. The slavish and mechanical engrossing of words, lines and stanzas upon some blank tablet of the brain, is of questionable benefit; but where the student is able to learn the poem as a *poem*, not as a column of verses, — to possess himself, by the powers of attention and analysis, of the sequence of events and grouping of images, remembering these in the poet's own language, because on trial he finds that language the most natural and best; this surpasses for poetic education every exercise that the ingenuity of teacher can devise.

At all events, leave the student alone with the poet at

the first and at the last. Let him have his earliest reading of the poem with fresh, unprejudiced mind, and when teacher, classroom and critics have done their best and their worst with him, return him to the poet again. If possible, let a little time intervene, and then let the poem be read aloud before the class; or, better still, recited by some one who has entered deeply into its spirit, and whose voice is musical and expressive. So will the first impression be intensified, and the seed-sowing of analysis and criticism be harvested in a richer renewal of poetic sympathy. For poetry is not knowledge to be apprehended; it is passion to be felt, — passion for the truth revealed in beauty, and for the hinted truth too beautiful to be revealed.

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

IN SEVEN PARTS.

(1797.)

Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit? et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quæ loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in Tabulâ, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari; ne mens assuefacta hodiernæ vitæ minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus.

T. BURNET: ARCHÆOL. PHIL. p. 68.

TRANSLATION. — I readily believe that there are more invisible beings in the universe than visible. But who will declare to us the nature of all these, the rank, relationships, distinguishing characteristics and qualities of each? What is it they do? Where is it they dwell? Always the human intellect circles around the knowledge of these mysteries, never touching the centre. Meanwhile it is, I deny not, oft-times well pleasing to behold sketched upon the mind, as upon a tablet, a picture of the greater and better world; so shall not the spirit, wonted to the petty concerns of daily life, narrow itself overmuch, nor sink utterly into trivialities. But meanwhile we must diligently seek after truth, and maintain a temperate judgment, if we would distinguish certainty from uncertainty, day from night.

T. BURNET: ARCHÆOL. PHIL. p. 68.

PART I.

An ancient Mariner meeteth three gallants bidden to a wedding-feast, and detaineth one.

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

"The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
Mayst hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!"
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three-years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale,

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with good wind and fair weather till it reached the Line.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon"—
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest heareth the bridal music: but the Mariner continueth his tale.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner:

The ship, drawn by a storm toward the South Pole.

"And now the Storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold;
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

The land of ice, and of fearful sounds, where no living thing was to be seen.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen;
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality.

At length did cross an Albatross;
Through the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship as it returned northward, through fog and floating ice.

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine."

"God save thee, ancient Mariner,
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?"—"With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.

The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen

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PART II.

The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

His ship-mates cry out against the ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck.

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe;
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist.
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze continues; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

A spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning which the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the spirit that plagued us so:
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah, well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

The ship-mates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner; in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

PART III.

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

The ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

A flash of joy;

And horror follows. For can it be a *ship* that comes onward without wind or tide?

See! see! (I cried), she tacks no more.
Hither to work us weal, —
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well-nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that Woman's mate?

And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun. The Spectre-Woman and her Death-mate, and no other on board the skeleton ship

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare, Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Like vessel, like crew!

Death and Life-in-Death have diced for the ship's crew and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won, I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

No twilight within the courts of the sun.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip, —
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

At the rising of the Moon.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

One after another, his shipmates drop down dead.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan,)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

But Life-in-Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner.

The souls did from their bodies fly, —
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!"

PART IV.

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long and lank, and brown
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a spirit is talking to him;

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—
"Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

And envieth that they should live, and so many lie dead.

I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men.

An orphan's curse would drag to Hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

In loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside:

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay
The charmèd water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire;
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

Their beauty and their happiness.

He blesseth them in his heart.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

The spell begins to break.

PART V.

O sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck
That had so long remained,
I dreamed that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

By grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light, — almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessèd ghost.

He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the element

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side;
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
  Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
  The dead men gave a groan.

The oodies of the ship's crew are inspirited, and the ship moves on.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
  Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
  To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
  Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
  Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools, —
  We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
  Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
  But he said nought to me." —

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!" —
  "Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
  But a troop of spirits blest:

But not by the souls of the men, nor by dæmons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint.

For when it dawned, they dropped their arms,
  And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
  And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the Heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The lonesome spirit from the south pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion, —
Backwards and forwards half her length,
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two Voices in the air.

The Polar Spirit's fellow-dæmons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong; and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By Him Who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

PART VI.

FIRST VOICE.

'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing, —
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the Ocean doing?'

SECOND VOICE.

'Still as a slave before his lord,
The Ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast, —

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE.

The Mariner hath been cast into a trance; for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure.

'But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?'

SECOND VOICE.

'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

The supernatural motion is retarded; the Mariner awakes, and his penance begins anew.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen, —

The curse is finally expiated

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek,
Like a meadow-gale of Spring, —
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze, —
On me alone it blew.

And the ancient Mariner beholdeth his native country.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbor-bar,
And I with sobs did pray, —
Oh, let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbor-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colors came.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck, —
O Christ! what saw I there?

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

And appear in their own forms of light.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand;
No voice did they impart, —
No voice; but, oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third, — I heard his voice;
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII.

The Hermit of the wood.

This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve,—
He hath a cushion plump;
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

Approacheth the ship with wonder.

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said,
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look'
(The Pilot made reply),
'I am afeared.' — 'Push on, push on!'
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

The ship suddenly sinketh.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips, — the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha, ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

The ancient Mariner earnestly entreateth the Hermit to shrieve him; and the penance of life falls on him.

'O, shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'—
The Hermit crossed his brow.—
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say,—
What manner of man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns;
And, till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The Wedding-Guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark! the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

O, sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest,—
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

And to teach by his own example love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

NOTES ON THE ANCIENT MARINER.

In the manuscript notes which Wordsworth left behind him stands this record: "In the autumn of 1797, Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and myself started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon with a view to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones near to it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine*. Accordingly, we set off, and proceeded along the Quantock Hills towards Watchet; and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of the 'Ancient Mariner,' founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention, but certain parts I suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's 'Voyages,' a day or two before, that while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose,' said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.' The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to

do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least, not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous afterthought. We began the composition together on that, to me, memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular, —

> 'And listened like a three years' child :
> The Mariner had his will.'

These trifling contributions, all but one, which Mr. C. has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded,

> 'And thou art long, and lank, and brown
> As is the ribbed sea sand,'

slipped out of his mind, as well they might. As we endeavored to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening) our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. . . . The 'Ancient Mariner' grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds; and we began to think of a volume which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects."

Says De Quincey in his "Lake Poets:" —

"In the year 1810, I happened to be amusing myself by reading, in their chronological order, the great classical circumnavigations of the earth; and, coming to Shelvocke, I met with a passage to this effect: — That Hatley, his second captain (*i. e.* lieutenant), being a melancholy man, was possessed by a fancy that some long season of foul weather was due to an albatross which had steadily pursued the ship; upon which he shot the bird, but without mending their condition.

There at once I saw the germ of the 'Ancient Mariner:' . . . though it is very possible, from something which Coleridge said on another occasion, that before meeting a fable in which to embody his ideas, he had meditated a poem on delirium, confounding its own dream scenery with external things, and connected with the imagery of high latitudes."

Part the First. If this poem be compared for ballad characteristics with other sea ballads, as the "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "The Ship o' the Fiend," and, in Coleridge's own words, — "The grand old ballad of 'Sir Patrick Spence,'" it will be noticed how closely the first stanza of this last resembles in form the introductory stanza of the 'Ancient Mariner.'

> "The king sits in Dunfermline town,
> Drinking the blude-red wine;
> 'O whare will I get a skeely skipper
> To sail this new ship o' mine?'"

Part the Second: stanza fifth. In the "Sibylline Leaves" (1817), the second line is printed, —

> "The furrow stream'd off free,"

with the foot-note by Coleridge: "In the former edition the line was, —

> 'The furrow follow'd free;'

but I had not been long on board a ship before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore, or from another vessel. From the ship itself the *wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern." But in later editions the earlier and more musical expression was restored.

Part the Third: stanza tenth. Notice Milton's picture of Death:

> "That other shape —
> If shape it might be called that shape had none
> Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;
> Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,

For each seemed either — black it stood as Night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,
And shook a dreadful dart: what seemed his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on."

Paradise Lost, II., 666-673.

Stanza twelfth. In the early editions this was followed by the stanza:

"A gust of wind sterte up behind,
And whistled through his bones;
Through the holes of his eyes and the hole of his mouth,
Half whistles and half groans."

Part the Fourth: stanza fourth. Compare Milton's

"Attended with ten thousand thousand saints;"

Paradise Lost, VI., 767.

and Spenser's

"All these, and thousand thousands many more."

The Faerie Queene, II., XII., 25.

Stanza seventh, line fifth. The earlier editions have "cloud" for "load."

Part the Fifth: stanza sixteenth. See poems to "The Skylark," by Shelley, Wordsworth, and Hogg.

Stanza twenty-second. Notice this same echo-effect as a favorite device of Poe, in "Lenore," "Ulalume," "Annabel Lee," etc.

Part the Sixth: stanza tenth. Compare Spenser's

"So soone as Mammon there arrivd, the dore
To him did open and afforded way;
Him followed eke Sir Guyon evermore,
Ne darkeness him ne daunger might dismay.
Soone as he entred was, the dore streightway
Did shutt, and from behind it forth there lept
An ugly feend, more fowle than dismall day,
The which with monstrous stalke behind him stept,
And ever as he went dew watch upon him kept.

"Well hoped hee, ere long that hardy guest,
If ever covetous hand, or lustfull eye
Or lips he layd on thing that likte him best,
Or ever sleepe his eie-strings did untye,
Should be his pray; and therefore still on hye
He over him did hold his cruell clawes,
Threatning with greedy gripe to doe him dye,
And rend in peeces with his ravenous pawes,
If ever he transgrest the fatall Stygian lawes."

The Faerie Queene, II., VII., 26-27.

Stanza sixteenth, fourth line. Compare Longfellow's

"I stood on the bridge at midnight,
As the clocks were striking the hour,
And the moon rose o'er the city,
Behind the dark church-tower.

"I saw her bright reflection
In the waters under me,
Like a golden goblet falling
And sinking into the sea.

. . . .

"And forever and forever,
As long as the river flows,
As long as the heart has passions,
As long as life has woes,

"The moon and its broken reflection
And its shadows shall appear,
As the symbol of love in heaven,
And its wavering image here."

The Bridge.

Stanza eighteenth, first line. Compare Coleridge's

"Hark! the cadence dies away
On the yellow, moonlight sea."

Remorse, Act III., Sc. I., Song.

Part the Seventh: stanza second. Compare Goldsmith's her mit in "Edwin and Angelina."

Stanza twenty-second. Compare Wordsworth's

"The Being, that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.

. . . . .

"One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught by what Nature shows, and what conceals;
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

Hart-Leap Well

Compare also the conclusion of Tennyson's "Two Voices."

QUESTIONS ON THE ANCIENT MARINER.

PART THE FIRST.

WHY should not the poem open less abruptly, — with a description, for example, of the surrounding scenery, as in Longfellow's "Evangeline"? Would the first scene be equally effective, if the Wedding-Guest were alone, instead of "one of three"? Is there any gain in thus giving us the picture of the Ancient Mariner, — not directly, but in the words of the Wedding-Guest? What is the impression made on the Wedding-Guest at the outset by the "long grey beard and glittering eye"? What poetic purpose is served by setting this tale of the Ancient Mariner against the background of a wedding feast? What indication of hurry and impatience is there in the last line of the second stanza? What is the meaning of *eftsoons*? How is it that the "glittering eye" holds the Wedding-Guest better than the "skinny hand"? What do the interruptions of the Wedding-Guest, as the tale proceeds, indicate in regard to his successive states of mind? Are there more reasons than one for giving this picture of the harbor here? How does the poem tell us in what direction the ship is sailing? Where is the ship when the sun stands over the mast at noon? What makes the beauty of the ninth stanza? Does the tenth stanza gain or lose in force from the fact that every line is the repetition of a former line? How do you understand the line

"Still treads the shadow of his foe"?

What is the main force of the comparison in the twelfth stanza? How do the following three stanzas contrast with the twelfth? What impressions are made upon the ship's crew by this Antarctic

sea? How do you understand the word *drifts* in this connection? Why was it a "*dismal* sheen"? What is the obvious and what the suggested significance of the comparison in the last line of the fifteenth stanza? What is the appearance of an albatross? How does the greeting given the Albatross make the Mariner's crime the more revolting? How do the actions of the Albatross enhance the guilt of the Mariner? What advantage is believed by the sailors to accrue to them from the presence of the Albatross? Why, as suggested in the phrase "vespers nine," with later references to the saints, "Mary Queen" and the "holy Hermit" who has power to shrive the soul of sin, does Coleridge choose Roman Catholicism for the religious setting of his poem? Is the snow-fog, glimmering white in the moonshine, white or dark by day? By what device does the poet increase the effect upon us of the Mariner's confession? What have been so far the sounds of the voyage? Can you find a line farther on in the poem which vividly depicts the last, ominous sound hinted at in this division of the tale?

PART THE SECOND.

When and how did the ship turn northward? Why did the Mariner shoot the Albatross? Why do his shipmates cry out against him? Have his shipmates any share in his crime, or is it unjust that they should share his punishment? What change is there in the appearance of the rising sun, as they pass from fog to clear weather? What is the "silent sea"? Would the first line of the sixth stanza be as effective written thus:

"Down dropt the breeze, down dropt the sails"?

At what point is the ship becalmed? What does the poet mean by a "*copper* sky?" What is the effect of the repetition in the eighth and ninth stanzas? Can you substitute a better word for *stuck* in the eighth stanza? What gives its peculiar force to the simile of the eighth stanza? In the ninth stanza, what is the syntax of *water?* What figure of speech prevails in this ninth stanza? Do the last two lines of the tenth stanza help or hinder

the poetic effect? Are the words "with legs" superfluous? Why is the rhyming effect emphasized in the first line of the eleventh stanza? What is the meaning of *rout* in this connection? What do you understand by *death-fires?* What suggestions come with the words "witch's oils"? Does the eleventh stanza, with its dance and color, produce upon you an impression of gladness? Why does not the poet make the avenging spirit visible? Can you find two lines, farther on in the poem, descriptive of this spirit? What are the numbers referred to in the poem, and why should these numbers be selected rather than others? What picture in strong contrast to this tropic belt of calms, is suggested to memory by the last line of the twelfth stanza? What is the derivation of *well-a-day?* Why do the sailors hang the Albatross about the Mariner's neck?

PART THE THIRD.

Does the word *weary* occur too often in the first stanza? What lines earlier in the poem convey a like idea with: "Each throat was parched," and which expression seems to you the stronger? Why does the poet place the spectral ship in the west? How does he arouse our expectation and interest as regards the ship? What picture is called up by the third line of the third stanza? How is this suggestion of a water-sprite in accordance with the rest of the poem? How does the fourth stanza compare with the gloss upon it? What is the derivation of *Gramercy?* Why does the poet use the word *grin* in this connection? What is the significance of the last two lines of the fifth stanza? How do you picture the group of mariners that stand watching the progress of the coming ship? Are their eyes still glazed? What successive changes pass over their faces, as the ship draws near? What feeling does the Ancient Mariner express in the sixth stanza? Is there any indication in the seventh stanza that he regards the ship as supernatural? Why should the picture sketched in the eighth stanza fill the Ancient Mariner with fear? What reason have we for assuming that his feeling is one of fear?

What is the meaning of the gloss: "Like vessel, like crew"? What is the gain in poetic effect from placing this scene at the hour of sunset? What is the derivation of *gossameres?* What does the word *gossameres* suggest in regard to the sails? What figure of speech gives force to stanzas ninth and tenth? Why is the attention of the Ancient Mariner concentrated from the first upon the Woman rather than upon Death? Is there any culmination of horror in the questions of the Ancient Mariner? Does the Woman, with her red lips and yellow locks, impress us as beautiful? What feeling does she arouse in us? What is there in the description to justify this feeling? How do you picture that group of the twain casting dice? (See *Notes* for Milton's conception of Death.) What is the demeanor of the Woman? What do you imagine to be the demeanor of Death? What was the stake in this game which the Woman has won? Has Death won anything by the dice? How does the gloss enhance the beauty of the description given in the first two lines of the thirteenth stanza? How does the sentence structure in those two lines heighten the effect? What are the peculiarly expressive words in those lines? To what sense does the first half of the thirteenth stanza appeal? To what sense the second? What causes the "far-heard whisper"? Why is the swift motion of the spectre-bark so appalling? What is signified by the looking *sideways* up? What is the force of the comparison in the fourteenth stanza? How do the dim stars and thick night correspond with the Mariner's mood? What is the value of the fifth and sixth lines of this stanza? What is the eastern *bar?* Can you sketch

> "The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
> Within the nether tip"?

What is the function, in the narrative, of this long stanza? Is the expression "the star-dogged Moon" pleasant or unpleasant to you? Why does the poet throw moonlight, rather than darkness, over so terrible a scene? Why does he make the deaths so swift and sudden? What seems to the horror-stricken Mariner most strange

about these deaths? What is the peculiarity of certain words employed in the third line of the sixteenth stanza? Why should the poet arrange that the close of the sixteenth stanza suggest the beginning of the fifteenth? Has the Ancient Mariner a heavier or lighter punishment than his shipmates? When does his torment of conscience begin? Why should the poet close each division of the tale with an allusion to the Albatross?

PART THE FOURTH.

Why does the Wedding-Guest fear the Ancient Mariner? What do you understand by the expression "the *ribbed* sea sand"? What does that expression modify? What in form goes to constitute the peculiar power of the third stanza? What in substance? How do the glosses interpret that mood of the Ancient Mariner suggested in the fourth stanza? How does the Ancient Mariner regard himself? What is the feeling which constrains him to turn his eyes from "the rotting sea"? What is the feeling which constrains him to turn his eyes from "the rotting deck"? What is the feeling which constrains him to turn his eyes from Heaven? What figures of speech occur in the sixth stanza? Do you detect any technical fault in this stanza? Does the Mariner escape his punishment by closing his eyes? What line earlier in the poem is formed like the third line of the seventh stanza? What similarity in poetic effect follows upon this similarity of structure? What is the climax of the Mariner's suffering? What is the effect upon him of the seven days and nights of penance? What first beguiles him from the consciousness of his own guilt and wretchedness? How is the verse suggestive here of the motion of the Moon? How does this tenth stanza contrast, in music and in vision, with the earlier part of the poem? What corresponding change may we infer is coming over the spirit of the Mariner? Why does his heart yearn toward "the journeying Moon," with her attendant stars? What added beauty does the gloss lend to the vision? Does the Mariner recognize the peaceful joy of the stars? In seeing the moon and the stars,

what have his tortured eyes at last forgotten to see? How do the Moon's beams *bemock* the main? What suggestion does the word *charmèd* throw upon this tropical sea-picture? What effect does the silence throughout all this scene produce? How is it that the Mariner can now bear to look upon the sea? With what feeling does he now watch those "slimy things," — "God's creatures of the great calm"? How do the water-snakes without the shadow of the ship contrast with those within the shadow? Why does the poet speak of "the *elfish* light"? What colors have we in the picture now? How is the Mariner able to distinguish beauty where before he had seen but the loathsome and the horrible? What is the force of the metaphor in the third line of the fourteenth stanza? What word in the following line enforces that metaphor? With what lines earlier in the poem do the last two lines of the fourteenth stanza contrast? What change in the Mariner's spirit is indicated by this contrast? In blessing the water-snakes, whom else does the Mariner bless? Why could he not pray before? How is it that he can pray now? Why at this point should the Albatross fall from his neck? Why is the Albatross described as sinking

"Like *lead* into the sea"?

Why should not the poem end here?

PART THE FIFTH.

How is it that the Ancient Mariner can sleep at last? What other praises of sleep do you find in poetry? How is the second line of the first stanza especially suited to the general range of this poem? How is the musical effect of the last two lines produced? What is the meaning of *silly* in this connection? Was the Mariner's dream unnatural? In what terms has he mentioned his lips and throat before? Would it have been better for the Mariner if he had died in sleep and become "a blessed ghost"? What further allusions have we to the "roaring wind"? What is the significance of *burst* in stanza sixth? What are the *fire flags*? What is the picture suggested by the sixth stanza? Why is the rhyming effect emphasized? How is the expression "*wan* stars"

peculiarly appropriate here? Does the comparison in the seventh stanza seem to you good? In the eighth stanza, what is the most forceful word? What is the meaning of *jag* here? What has been the progress of events since the Mariner awoke? What is the climax of that progress? Why should the poet resort to this device of inspiriting the bodies of the crew? What is the effect on the Mariner of the rising of the dead men? How does his present mood contrast with his mood as described in the first half of Part Fourth? Has the curse faded from the dead eyes of the sailors? Why does the Wedding-Guest again shrink back from the Ancient Mariner? At what hour do the blest spirits leave the bodies? In what form do the spirits ascend? Why is the rhyming effect emphasized in the first line of the fifteenth stanza? Why do the sounds seek the Sun? What is the suggestion in the word *darted?* Why should the poet select the *skylark* for special mention? What is the meaning of *jargoning* here? Why does the poet change the tense in the seventeenth stanza? How does the simile in the eighteenth stanza compare with, —

"And the sails did sigh like sedge"?

Why "the *sleeping* woods"? Why "a *quiet* tune"? Why this sound of a breeze in the sails? When do the sails leave off their tune? Where is the ship then? How do you reconcile the gloss here with the gloss on the sixth stanza of Part Second? Why cannot the Polar Spirit carry the ship beyond the Line? Why has he borne on the ship so far? Is this restless, violent motion of the ship better or worse than her previous becalmed condition? What does the poet mean by "living life"? What are these voices in the air? Wherein is the Mariner's deed a contrast to the deed of "Him Who died on cross"? What does the first voice tell us that makes the crime of the Mariner darker than before? What feeling is expressed by the first voice? What by the second?

PART THE SIXTH.

As you seem to hear the two voices, what is the difference in their sound and tone? Which does the poet represent as wiser, the

pitiful or the indignant spirit? Which spirit sees effect? Which sees cause? What scientific truth have we in stanzas second and third? What addition of poetic beauty? What bears on the ship? Why is the rhyming effect emphasized in the converse of the spirits? What further penance awaits the Mariner on awaking? How has it come to pass that the dead men stand together on the deck? What horror does the Mariner behold in the moonlight? When the spell is snapt and he draws his eyes from the glittering eyes of the dead, why cannot he clearly see the sights of the ocean? What corresponds in his experience to the frightful fiend of the comparison? What in the description leads us to feel that this wind is a symbol of hope? What would you select as the two most beautiful lines of the description? What poetic device is employed in the thirteenth stanza? What significance in the last line of that stanza? How does the poet make the fourteenth stanza expressive of strong emotion? Why does the Mariner take the sight of his "own countree" for a dream? How does his prayer connect with this first exclamation? Where have we seen already a picture of this same harbor? Was that also a moonlight picture? What reason is there for the change of order in these two mentions of hill and kirk and light-house top? What is the meaning of *strewn* in stanza sixteenth? Is the phenomenon described in the latter part of this stanza true to nature? What is the effect of the silence here as contrasted with the effect of that pervading Part Fourth? How does the phrase "the *steady* weathercock" deepen this impression? Is moonlight always white? How has the moon-picture prepared us for this second shadow-picture? Why does the poet show us the crimson reflections of the seraphs on the moonlight bay before we see the "men of light" themselves? How had the troop of blessed spirits been manifest before? Is there any expression here linking this scene to that? Why should the poet select the color crimson for the seraph-men? Instead of angel songs, what sounds does the Mariner hear? What is his chief reason for rejoicing in these sounds?

PART THE SEVENTH.

Has the poet any design in the number of these divisions? Why has he changed his usual term to *marineres?* Has he taken a like liberty with any other word in the poem? By what hint does the poet bring before us a vivid picture of the Hermit's oratory? Why is it natural for the Hermit to liken the thin sails to wintry leaves? What is the *ivy-tod?* What impression is made by the last two lines of the fifth stanza? How does the fourth stanza help to prepare us for the eighth? What causes the sinking of the ship? What general truth is there in the comparison "swift as dreams"? Is there peculiar value in such a comparison in this poem? Why is the rhyming effect emphasized in the tenth stanza? What else conduces to make the latter part of this stanza musical? Is the beauty of these two lines altogether in the music? What is the penance which the Hermit lays on the Mariner? In the seventeenth stanza, why would not the simile "like morn," for instance, be as good as "like night"? What did the Ancient Mariner see in the Wedding-Guest to lead him to declare his tale? What is your impression of the character of the Wedding-Guest? What contrast of sounds is there in the eighteenth stanza? What previous stanza is recalled by the second line of the nineteenth? Why does the Mariner find the kirk sweeter than the feast? Why does the Wedding-Guest turn from the bridegroom's door? What change has taken place in him? Does wisdom always bring sadness? How many successive sea-pictures can you find in the entire poem? How many moonlight pictures? Why does the poet have most of the scenes take place by moonlight? Why is the vocabulary of this poem so largely Anglo-Saxon? From what sources are the similes drawn? What is the general character of the similes? What are the most striking contrasts of the poem? What would you say of the melody? What of the imagery? What is the superficial falsehood of the poem? What the fundamental truth? What the central teaching?

INTERPRETATION OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

How much does the Ancient Mariner mean? Is it true, as is ingeniously argued by a contributor to the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* (July, 1880), that this poem embodies a complete system of Christian theology, presenting "the Fall from the innocence of ignorance, from the immediacy of natural faith; and the return, through the mediation of sin and doubt, to conscious virtue and belief"? Does the Ancient Mariner represent mankind? the ship, the physical environment of the soul? the Albatross, faith in spiritual things? the snow-fog, ignorance? the golden sun, knowledge of good and evil? the tropic seas, the weary calm of "mere finite subjectivity"? the demon woman, unbelief? the spirit under the keel, divine grace? the Pilot and the Pilot's boy, "sensuous knowing and finite understanding"? the Hermit, reason? and the happy outcome, the loss of "all particularity" and recognition of "the true Universal"?

However edifying such a hieroglyphic reading between the lines may be to the philosophers, there is little reason to suppose that Coleridge and Wordsworth, in their merry tramp over the Quantock Hills, had the faintest suspicion of their own profundity, as they planned together, with young imaginations aglow, this wild, picturesque, melodious ballad of dreamland. Certainly any attempt to expound to youthful students of the "Ancient Mariner" an interpretation so technical — may philosophy forgive the term! — would result for them in mental bewilderment and disgust and an echo of Endymion's cry, —

> "And now, by Pan,
> I care not for this old mysterious man!"

Yet few teachers will be content to pass the poem by without an effort to impress upon their classes not merely its marvellous poetic beauty, the elfin sweetness of the music, the vivid imagery of the swiftly shifted scenes, the terse energy of phrase, and artistic order and harmony of the whole, but also its undoubted, inmost teaching that the soul makes its own world, and that in alliance with the living spirit of love is the only life of man. "My endeav-

ors," says Coleridge, distinguishing between his work and that of Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads*, "were to be directed to persons and characters supernatural, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest, and a semblance of truth, sufficient to procure from these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith." And throughout the "Ancient Mariner" we clearly perceive it to be the "inward nature" which is mirrored upon the changing face of that magical, moonlight ocean. It is the storm of life that rages there so "tyrannous and strong"; it is the dreary, stagnant selfishness of the soul which by wanton act has severed itself from the living principle of love — the wretched soul, "alone, alone," and perishing of thirst — that paints the ghastly waters of that awful tropic sea; it is the revival of love in the heart that calls down from Heaven the sweet rain of refreshment. "Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner,'" writes Professor Corson of Cornell University, in his "Introduction to Browning," "is an imaginative expression of that divine love which embraces all creatures, from the highest to the lowest, of the consequences of the severance of man's soul from this animating principle of the universe, and of those spiritual threshings by and through which it is brought again under its blessed influence."

The temptation is strong to carry on this thought into minute illustration, but it is dangerous for prose to attempt to speak for poetry. The "Ancient Mariner" is its own best interpreter. Every reader who becomes subject to its subtle spell will prefer to be left free to read his own meanings into its flashing hints. For that it teaches by inspired suggestion rather than by infolding within itself an elaborate system of thought or even a detailed history of human experience follows from its essential character as the most poetical of poems, as first and foremost a *tour de force* of the imagination. Rev. Stopford Brooke, in "Theology in the English Poets," insists upon the simplicity of its lesson. "We see in it how childlike the philosophic man could be in his faith, how little was enough for him. Its religion is all contained in the phrase — 'He prayeth well who loveth well both man and bird and

beast.' On this the changes are rung throughout; the motiveless slaughter of the bird is a crime; the other mariners who justify the killing of the bird because of the good it seems to bring them are even worse sinners than the ancient mariner. He did the ill deed on a hasty impulse; they deliberately agree to it for selfish reasons. They sin a second time against love, by throwing the whole guilt on him, and again for selfish reasons. They are fatally punished; he lives to feel and expiate his wrong. And the turning point of his repentance is in the re-awakening of love, and is clearly marked. Left all alone on the sea, 'he despiseth the creatures of the calm, and envieth that so many should live and so many lie dead,' and in that temper of contempt and envy Coleridge suggests that no prayer can live. But when seven days had passed, he looked again on God's creatures of the great calm, and seeing their beauty and their happiness, forgot his own misery, and the curse, and himself in them, and blessed and loved them, and in that temper of spirit, prayer became possible."

On this at least all the interpreters are agreed, — that the kernel of the whole poem is love, — love as the living link between man and nature, — love as the atmosphere wherein alone spirit life is possible, — that love of God which involves the love of the least of His beloved. In one of Coleridge's early poems, a meditative essay in blank verse entitled "Religious Musings," which is believed by certain critics to present in a didactic form the meanings of the "Ancient Mariner," this chief burden of the ballad is distinctly voiced:

> "There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind,
> Omnific. His most holy name is Love.
> Truth of subliming import! with the which
> Who feeds and saturates his constant soul
> He from his small particular orbit flies
> With blest outstarting! from himself he flies,
> Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
> Views all creation; and he loves it all,
> And blesses it, and calls it very good!"

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

The Students' Series of English Classics.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL'S

VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

AND

OTHER POEMS

EDITED BY

MABEL CALDWELL WILLARD

INSTRUCTOR IN LITERATURE, NEW HAVEN, CONN.

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PREFACE.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL stands among the foremost of American poets: — perhaps the majority of scholars would say, that for range of subject, for power and grace of expression, and for poetic insight and spiritual vision, he stands as the foremost of American poets.

It was, therefore, a wise decision that placed *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, one of the most poetic of Lowell's poems, on the list of requirements in English literature for entrance to our colleges.

It has been the endeavor in this edition to make the Notes and Questions of such a nature as will help the student, — first, to get the truth which the poet would teach; and, second, to see the beauty of the poetic language, music, and figure, and their relation to the thought.

The thanks of the editor are due to Prof. Katharine Lee Bates, of Wellesley College, who has kindly allowed her "Hints on the Handling of a Poem," which

forms part of the Introduction to her edition of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, to be reprinted here.

For the use of some of the facts in the Biographical Sketch, acknowledgment is here made to Mr. Francis H. Underwood's *Biographical Sketch of James Russell Lowell*.

MABEL CALDWELL WILLARD.

NEW HAVEN, CONN.,
November, 1896.

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INTRODUCTION.

I. SKETCH OF LOWELL'S LIFE. (1819–1891.)

James Russell Lowell came from a Massachusetts family descended from Percival Lowell of Bristol, England, who came to New England in 1639, and settled in Newbury. The family, as far back as can be traced, has been eminent for those characteristics of great intelligence, rare ability, and high moral worth, which distinguish only the truly great. Lowell's grandfather, John Lowell, drafted the clause in the Constitution of Massachusetts by which slavery was brought to its end in that State. His father was a clergyman in Boston for over fifty years; his mother, who was Harriet Traill Spence before her marriage, was of Scotch descent, and it was from her that the son inherited his imaginative, poetic nature.

Four children preceded James Russell, who was born on the 22d of February, 1819, at "Elmwood," Cambridge,— where, in the same house, seventy-two years later, he passed on into the higher life. "Elmwood" is a beautiful, old New England place, with ample grounds studded with large fine elms. The influence of his environment is most forcibly seen

in his writings. His poems are crowded with similes and metaphors taken from Nature, and show him to have been, not merely a close observer of her, but a friend who entered into warmest sympathy with her every mood.

His father's library contained an excellent collection of miscellaneous works; and here the boy browsed, and fed, and cultivated his taste with biographies, travels, and classics from the English and French. When he was sixteen he entered Harvard College; but distinguished himself more by his indifference to the prescribed studies than by his attainments in them. He himself has frankly confessed that he would never have been allowed to take his degree had it not been that he was his father's son. It is pleasant to remember, and perhaps consoling to some youthful minds to think, that in years after he became a professor in this same University, and received honorary degrees from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, England. His negligence of the college curriculum, of which he repented in later days, was, however, more than compensated for, in the way of literary culture, by his great love for reading, and the excellent judgment which he exercised in satisfying this love.

In 1844 he married Miss Maria White, the influence of whose pure and beautiful character upon the young man was most ennobling and permanent. His own innate nobility and beauty of soul received through her a stimulus and inspiration which never left him. At "Elmwood" still hang their portraits, painted by William Page. "She, with refined features, transparent skin, starry blue eyes, and smooth bands of light brown hair; he, with serious face and eyes in shadow, with ruddy, wavy, and glossy auburn hair falling almost to the shoulders, a full, reddish beard, wearing a coarse-textured

brown coat, and a broad linen collar turned carelessly down. There are few modern portraits in which costume counts for so little, and soul for so much." The social life became to him from this time forth a medium through which his spiritual nature might work for the ennobling of his fellow-beings. It is interesting to note that it was soon after his marriage that the following poem, *Sir Launfal*, was written. No one can read his poetry without being impressed by his consecration to all that is pure and just and holy. His efforts were always in behalf of freedom, love of man, and love of Christ.

In the *Biglow Papers*, two series, the first published in 1848, and the second during the Civil War, 1861–1866, he enlisted himself in the anti-slavery cause — a cause which in those early days was a most unpopular one, even in the North.

In 1851 and 1852 he spent some time travelling in Europe with his wife, whose health was growing constantly more frail. In 1853 this wife, in whose fellowship there had been such rare inspiration, passed on into the unseen world — and yet we cannot feel that there was any real separation, for to one of his beautiful sonnets we listen with bowed head, hearing words which tell of his heart's history: —

> "Love hath so purified my being's core,
> Meseems I scarcely should be startled, even,
> To find, some morn, that thou hadst gone before,
> Since, with thy love, this knowledge too was given,
> Which each calm day doth strengthen more and more,
> That they who love are but one step from Heaven."

In 1855 he succeeded Longfellow as professor of Modern Languages and Literature at Harvard College.

In 1857 he became editor of the *Atlantic Monthly;* this office he filled for about five years, and then, for the next ten years, held a similar position on the *North American Review.* It was in the same year in which he undertook the editorship of the *Atlantic Monthly* that he was married to Miss Frances Dunlap, a woman of prepossessing qualities of mind and person.

He was United States Minister to Spain in 1877, and from 1880 to 1885 United States Minister to England. In his capacity as foreign minister, especially in Great Britain, where he was much longer than in Spain, he held a most enviable place in the esteem and regard of the Queen and her subjects. Here, as everywhere, he was always a most loyal American. His patriotism never allowed him to swerve from his democratic principles, and his loyalty to high ideals kept him singularly free from the slightest subserviency to a desire for fame.

Besides his poems he published at various times essays — *Among my Books,* and *My Study Windows;* and addresses, both literary and political. Lowell's prose is clear, often brilliant, and always delightful.

But it is as a poet pre-eminently that we love and admire him. Perhaps to no other American is the name of poet more truly applicable, although he himself most generously and admiringly shared it with Longfellow, Whittier, Bryant, and Holmes.

His sense of humor is most happy; it was by the use of the humorous element, rather than the serious, that he did his most effective work for the anti-slavery cause.

He had a love for Nature, both intense and deep; as with Wordsworth, she was to him a living, breathing soul. His

own words express this attitude towards her more perfectly than can any one else: —

> "An' th' airth don't git put out with me
> *That love her's though she was a woman.*"

But although a poet of Nature, he is still more the poet of Man; the weak and the oppressed found in him a courageous and impassioned spokesman; he feared no censure nor scorn that his allegiance to the slave might bring him; he longed only to break his chains, and to help bring the happy day when each man should look upon his neighbor, whether of high or low degree, as his brother.

He is even more deeply the poet of Love. His poems which have love for their theme are less numerous than the others, but they are quite as profound, and reach even more nearly to the core of the man's heart. It was through this love, which so influenced and held his life, that he became the champion of the weak and downtrodden.

> "That love for one, from which there doth not spring
> Wide love for all, is but a worthless thing.
> Not in another world, as poets prate,
> Dwell we apart above the tide of things,
> High floating o'er earth's clouds on faery wings;
> But our pure love doth ever elevate
> Into a holy bond of brotherhood
> All earthly things, making them pure and good."

And it was through this sweet human love that there entered into his life the consecration to the Love which is the source of all happiness and noble living. In his poem entitled *The Search*, he has expressed it thus: —

"So from my feet the dust
Of the proud World I shook;
Then came dear Love and shared with me his crust,
And half my sorrow's burden took.
After the World's soft bed,
Its rich and dainty fare,
Like down seemed Love's coarse pillow to my head,
His cheap food seemed as manna rare;
Fresh-trodden prints of bare and bleeding feet,
Turned to the heedless city whence I came,
Hard by I saw, and springs of worship sweet
Gushed from my cleft heart smitten by the same;
Love looked me in the face and spake no words,
But straight I knew those footprints were the Lord's.

"I followed where they led,
And in a hovel rude,
With naught to fence the weather from his head,
The King I sought for meekly stood;
A naked, hungry child
Clung round his gracious knee,
And a poor hunted slave looked up and smiled
To bless the smile that set him free;
New miracles I saw his presence do, —
No more I knew the hovel bare and poor,
The gathered chips into a woodpile grew,
The broken morsel swelled to goodly store;
I knelt and wept: my Christ no more I seek,
His throne is with the outcast and the weak."

All of his poems are fraught with this deeply religious element. The spiritual life was the only *real* life to him: —

"O Power, more near my life than life itself."

There was in it no moroseness or narrowness; it was as broad and deep and joyous as the sunshine; it was as clear

and happy as the song of birds; and it was surer than his very life — nay, it was his very life.

"O Power, more near my life than life itself
(Or what seems life to us in sense immured),
Even as the roots, shut in the darksome earth,
Share in the tree-top's joyance, and conceive
Of sunshine and wide air and wingëd things
By sympathy of nature, so do I
Have evidence of Thee so far above,
Yet in and of me! Rather Thou the root
Invisibly sustaining, hid in light,
Not darkness, or in darkness made by us.
If sometimes I must hear good men debate
Of other witness of Thyself than Thou,
As if there needed any help of ours
To nurse Thy flickering life, that else must cease,
Blown out, as 'twere a candle, by men's breath,
My soul shall not be taken in their snare,
To change her inward surety for their doubt
Muffled from sight in formal robes of proof:
While she can only feel herself through Thee,
I fear not Thy withdrawal; more I fear,
Seeing, to know Thee not, hoodwinked with dreams
Of signs and wonders, while, unnoticed, Thou,
Walking Thy garden still, commun'st with men,
Missed in the commonplace of miracle."

II. LOWELL'S LITERARY STYLE.

If faultless verse were the one requisite of poetry, then we should not be able to give to Lowell, one of our sweetest and truest melodists, the name of poet. But if, as Stopford Brooke says, "poetry is an art, and the artist in poetry is the one who writes for pure pleasure and for nothing else the thing he writes, and who desires to give to others the same fine pleas-

ure by his poems which he had in writing them," — and since highest pleasure can come only through true, and noble, and joyous life, — then Lowell, whose poems are full of inspiration to such life, must take the highest rank among our home poets — must take, at times, rank with the best poets of the English language.

Stopford Brooke goes on, however, to say that the thing the poet "most cares about is that the form in which he puts his thoughts or feelings may be perfectly fitting to the subject, and as beautiful as possible." Here Lowell finds his limitations; here he falls short of always ranking among the best poets. Either he does not care sufficiently that his "form" "may be as beautiful as possible," or he is unable to clothe his thought in its most beautiful garb. But considering the beauty of his thought, and at times the beauty of his form, he is always a poet, — sometimes a poet of highest rank.

Although occasionally we can trace a happy similarity between his style and that of some other writer, yet he is never a copyist, only an appreciative admirer of the poet in question; his style is always his own.

Sometimes it is stately and dignified, but oftener quick and joyous in movement, as though brain and heart were so full of thoughts, and beautiful imagery for them, that the hand could not be timed in expressing them. He is always simple and earnest; seldom is the impression made of studied effect, either in grace or dignity. And the style is the exponent of the man; the simple, eager, childlike of heart, but noble and gracious man, is as much revealed to us through his mode of expression, as by the thoughts themselves. And in his simplicity and naturalness lies one of the chief charms of his style. It is only in rare and unfortunate instances that

we detect an effort after the elaborate; as a rule no word is added which might have been left out, no thought introduced which wearies by reiteration. This earnestness of style is made emphatic by a clear and vigorous mode of expression.

His figures, drawn largely from nature, have the tone and color of life, and are always in harmony with the thought.

There is no one, perhaps, who has more deliciously blended wit and humor than Lowell; his humor is as sweet as Chaucer's, but more rollicking; his wit as keen and pointed as the sharpest arrow-tip, but never moistened with the smallest drop of poison. Underneath the wit and humor one feels the kindly heart which has reverence for every human soul, although exposing so ruthlessly the follies and weaknesses which too often hinder and warp those souls.

Although not a dramatist, yet he has held the mirror up to the face of man so steadily, that we see reflected the features of many faces in outlines clear and distinct.

III. LITERARY ESTIMATES OF LOWELL.

"With such a genius for comedy, — greater, I believe, than any English poet ever had, — with such wit, drollery, Yankee sense and spirit, I wonder he does not see his 'best hold,' and stick to it."

THACKERAY.

"If we look at certain grave, sweet pages of Thackeray, Newman, Martineau, Matthew Arnold, and the Ruskin of thirty years ago, we feel that we have in them specimens of ideal English. Something of the calm dignity, the seemingly artless perfection, and the limpid movement, characteristic of those writers, may sometimes be seen in passages of Lowell;

but his felicity in figures, and the irrepressible rush of his double stream of thought, often lead him into a style of writing that is both poetry and prose, and is not purely either. . . .

"If the soul of poetry is energy, its garment beauty, its effect emotion; if, according to Landor, 'philosophy should run through poetry as veins do through the body'; if that is a poem which is inspired with original thought, graced by unborrowed pictures and figures, and which suggests continually more than meets the eye, — then it will be impossible to deny Lowell a high rank among poets. . . .

"Poems with such a range, such vivid conceptions, such high purpose, such keen insight, such tender sympathy, and such flashing lights of imagery, have never been very common."

FRANCIS H. UNDERWOOD, LL.D.

"There is no historic circle of wits and scholars, not that of Beaumont and Ben Jonson where, haply, Shakespeare sat, nor Pope's, nor Dryden's, nor Addison's, nor Dr. Johnson's Club, nor that of Edinburgh; nor any Parisian *salon* or German study, to which Lowell's abundance would not have contributed a golden drop, and his glancing wit a glittering repartee." [On his prose.] "Racy and rich, and often of the most sonorous or delicate cadence, it is still the prose of a poet and a master of the differences of form. His prose indeed is often profoundly poetic — that is, quick with imagination, but always in the form of prose, not of poetry. It is so finely compact of illustration, of thought and learning, of wit and fancy and permeating humor, that his prose page sparkles and sways like a phosphorescent sea."

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

"The style of Mr. Lowell is emphatically his own, and yet no man reports so habitually — half sympathetically, half whimsically — the ring of other writers. Homer Wilbur is especially redolent or resonant of the old Elizabethan masters.

"We hear the grave Verulam Lord Bacon, or the judicious Hooker. . . . Sometimes we get an odd flavor of Swift, bright humor being substituted for malignant satire; at others, the flowing and tender style of Jeremy Taylor comes back to us as we read. . . .

"Yet is he as voluminous and many-sided in poetry as in prose; 'he sings to one clear harp in divers tones.'"

H. R. Haweis.

"As often as the first eight lines of this poem [*The Vision of Sir Launfal*] come to mind, I feel a poetic breath not borne to me again from our home hills and fields, and rarely wafted from the old lands beyond the sea; and passing on to the thirty-third line beginning,

'And what is so rare as a day in June?'

I say each time, 'Here and in certain passages of the later odes are the purest, the sweetest, and at the same time the freshest strains from any singer of our soil.'"

John Vance Cheney.

IV. HINTS ON THE HANDLING OF A POEM.

[From Prof. Katharine Lee Bates's edition of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*.)

"Poetry," says Coleridge, "is the blossom and the fragrance of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language."

Essentially a poem cannot be taught. The student learns his deepest lesson from the poet and from no other. A teacher does well to be on his guard, lest he obtrude his own personality between the two. It is the poet himself, who, arresting the attention by song, holding it by vision after vision, can best impart to the young intellect the truth he has to tell, can alone inspire in the young heart a sympathetic passion for that truth. The function of the teacher, in dealing with any particular poem, is, first and foremost, to help the student fix his attention upon it. This can usually be done by questioning, better than in any other way. A running fire of questions, searching, varied, stimulates the mental activity, pricks into life the sluggish perceptions, gives form and color to those poem-pictures which are often so dimly and vaguely reproduced by the untutored imagination; and thus securing the vivid presentment of the scene, the clear comprehension of the thought, does away with the intellectual barrier, and brings the heart of the student into free contact with the glowing heart of the poet. Since definite knowledge is a requisite basis for true sympathy, such questions would relate in part to the meaning of terms and phrases employed; and rigid must be the will of that teacher who is not sometimes tempted aside from his main object by the "fossil poetry" of individual words, and led to inquire into the secrets of their origin and growth; yet the study of literature is more than philology. Such questions might relate, in part, to the structure of sentences; the significance of allusions, geographical, historical, mythological; the value of an illustration; the force of an argument; the development of a thought; — all this to insure a firm intellectual grasp of the subject-matter. Yet this done, the half has not been done. To understand the poet's message

is one thing; to feel it, know it, and reach out beyond it toward the purer message he suggests, but has not words to utter, is another. Indeed, care should constantly be taken that these more superficial questions be kept in the background and not suffered to distract the student's mind from the poetic essence. For the study of literature must not be mistaken for the study of syntax, geography, history, mythology, or logic. All questions that awaken the imagination and enable it to glorify the printed words into such clear-colored visions as dazzled the "mind's eye" of the poet while he wrote are of peculiar value. Questions that quicken the ear to the music of the poet's verse, and all other questions that render the student aware of poetic artifice, responsive to poetic effects, indirectly serve to deepen the central impression of the poem; since these very melodies and rhetorical devices are not idle ornament, but the studied emphasis of the poet's word. Questions that lead the student to recognize and define in himself the emotions aroused by one passage or another in the poem, questions that call forth an attempt to supply missing links in the chain of events, questions that carry the reason and imagination forward on the lines suggested by the poet, all tend to mould the student's mood into sympathy with that higher mood, sensitive, eager, impassioned, in which the singer first conceived his song.

The question-method may be well supplemented by topical recitation, class discussion, citation of parallel passages, comparison with kindred poems and, under due precautions, the reading of criticisms. The committing a poem to memory, that its virtue may gradually distil into the mind and become a force in the unconscious life, is most desirable wherever it is possible to train the student to learn poetry by heart

and not by rote. The slavish and mechanical engrossing of words, lines, and stanzas upon some blank tablet of the brain, is of questionable benefit; but where the student is able to learn the poem as a *poem*, not as a column of verses, — to possess himself, by the powers of attention and analysis, of the sequence of events and grouping of images, remembering these in the poet's own language, because on trial he finds that language the most natural and best; this surpasses for poetic education every exercise that the ingenuity of teacher can devise.

At all events, leave the student alone with the poet at the first and at the last. Let him have his earliest reading of the poem with fresh, unprejudiced mind, and when teacher, classroom, and critics have done their best and their worst with him, return him to the poet again. If possible, let a little time intervene, and then let the poem be read aloud before the class; or, better still, recited by some one who has entered deeply into its spirit, and whose voice is musical and expressive. So will the first impression be intensified, and the seed-sowing of analysis and criticism be harvested in a richer renewal of poetic sympathy. For poetry is not knowledge to be apprehended; it is passion to be felt, — passion for the truth revealed in beauty, and for the hinted truth too beautiful to be revealed."

LOWELL'S POEMS.

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL.

PRELUDE TO PART FIRST.

I.

Over his keys the musing organist,
Beginning doubtfully and far away,
First lets his fingers wander as they list,
And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay:
Then, as the touch of his loved instrument
Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws his theme,
First guessed by faint auroral flushes sent
Along the wavering vista of his dream.

II.

Not only around our infancy
Doth heaven with all its splendors lie;
Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,
We Sinais climb and know it not.

III

Over our manhood bend the skies;
Against our fallen and traitor lives

The great winds utter prophecies;
With our faint hearts the mountain strives;
Its arms outstretched, the druid wood
Waits with its benedicite;
And to our age's drowsy blood
Still shouts the inspiring sea.

IV.

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us;
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us,
We bargain for the graves we lie in;
At the devil's booth are all things sold,
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;
For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking:
'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking;
No price is set on the lavish summer;
June may be had by the poorest comer.

V.

And what is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays:
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,

An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, groping blindly above it for light,
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers;
The flush of life may well be seen
Thrilling back over hills and valleys;
The cowslip startles in meadows green,
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,
And there's never a leaf nor a blade too mean
To be some happy creature's palace;
The little bird sits at his door in the sun,
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun
With the deluge of summer it receives;
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest, —
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best?

VI.

Now is the high-tide of the year,
And whatever of life hath ebbed away
Comes flooding back with a ripply cheer
Into every bare inlet and creek and bay;
Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,
We are happy now because God wills it;
No matter how barren the past may have been,
'Tis enough for us now that the leaves are green;
We sit in the warm shade and feel right well
How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell;

We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing
That skies are clear and grass is growing;
The breeze comes whispering in our ear
That dandelions are blossoming near,
  That maize has sprouted, that streams are flowing,
That the river is bluer than the sky,
That the robin is plastering his house hard by;
And if the breeze kept the good news back,
For other couriers we should not lack;
  We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing, —
And hark! how clear bold chanticleer,
Warmed with the new wine of the year,
  Tells all in his lusty crowing!

VII.

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;
Everything is happy now,
  Everything is upward striving;
'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green or skies to be blue, —
  'Tis the natural way of living:
Who knows whither the clouds have fled?
  In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake;
And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,
  The heart forgets its sorrow and ache;
The soul partakes the season's youth,
  And the sulphurous rifts of passion and woe
Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,
  Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.

What wonder if Sir Launfal now
Remembered the keeping of his vow?

PART FIRST.

I.

"My golden spurs now bring to me,
And bring to me my richest mail,
For to-morrow I go over land and sea
In search of the Holy Grail;
Shall never a bed for me be spread,
Nor shall a pillow be under my head,
Till I begin my vow to keep;
Here on the rushes will I sleep,
And perchance there may come a vision true
Ere day create the world anew."
Slowly Sir Launfal's eyes grew dim,
Slumber fell like a cloud on him,
And into his soul the vision flew.

II.

The crows flapped over by twos and threes,
In the pool drowsed the cattle up to their knees,
The little birds sang as if it were
The one day of summer in all the year,
And the very leaves seemed to sing on the trees:
The castle alone in the landscape lay
Like an outpost of winter, dull and gray;
'Twas the proudest hall in the North Countree,

And never its gates might opened be,
Save to lord or lady of high degree;
Summer besieged it on every side,
But the churlish stone her assaults defied;
She could not scale the chilly wall,
Though around it for leagues her pavilions tall
Stretched left and right,
Over the hills and out of sight;
  Green and broad was every tent,
  And out of each a murmur went
Till the breeze fell off at night.

III.

The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,
And through the dark arch a charger sprang,
Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight,
In his gilded mail, that flamed so bright
It seemed the dark castle had gathered all
Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its wall
  In his siege of three hundred summers long,
And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf,
  Had cast them forth: so, young and strong,
And lightsome as a locust-leaf,
Sir Launfal flashed forth in his maiden mail,
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

IV.

It was morning on hill and stream and tree,
  And morning in the young knight's heart;

Only the castle moodily
Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free,
And gloomed by itself apart;
The season brimmed all other things up
Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's cup.

V.

As Sir Launfal made morn through the darksome gate,
He was 'ware of a leper, crouched by the same,
Who begged with his hand and moaned as he sate;
And a loathing over Sir Launfal came;
The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,
The flesh 'neath his armor 'gan shrink and crawl,
And midway its leap his heart stood still
Like a frozen waterfall;
For this man, so foul and bent of stature,
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,
And seemed the one blot on the summer morn, —
So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

VI.

The leper raised not the gold from the dust:
"Better to me the poor man's crust,
Better the blessing of the poor,
Though I turn me empty from his door;
That is no true alms which the hand can hold;
He gives only the worthless gold
Who gives from a sense of duty;
But he who gives but a slender mite,

And gives to that which is out of sight,
That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty
Which runs through all and doth all unite, —
The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms.
The heart outstretches its eager palms,
For a god goes with it and makes it store
To the soul that was starving in darkness before."

PRELUDE TO PART SECOND.

I.

Down swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,
From the snow five thousand summers old;
On open wold and hill-top bleak
It had gathered all the cold,
And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's cheek;
It carried a shiver everywhere
From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare;
The little brook heard it and built a roof
'Neath which he could house him, winter-proof;
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams
He groined his arches and matched his beams;
Slender and clear were his crystal spars
As the lashes of light that trim the stars:
He sculptured every summer delight
In his halls and chambers out of sight;
Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt
Down through a frost-leaved forest-crypt,
Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed trees

Bending to counterfeit a breeze;
Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew
But silvery mosses that downward grew;
Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief
With quaint arabesques of ice-fern leaf;
Sometimes it was simply smooth and clear
For the gladness of heaven to shine through, and here
He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops
And hung them thickly with diamond drops,
That crystalled the beams of moon and sun,
And made a star of every one:
No mortal builder's most rare device
Could match this winter-palace of ice;
'Twas as if every image that mirrowed lay
In his depths serene through the summer day,
Each fleeting shadow of earth and sky,
  Lest the happy model should be lost,
Had been mimicked in fairy masonry
  By the elfin builders of the frost.

II.

Within the hall are song and laughter,
  The cheeks of Christmas glow red and jolly,
And sprouting is every corbel and rafter
  With lightsome green of ivy and holly;
Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide
Wallows the Yule-log's roaring tide;
The broad flame-pennons droop and flap
  And belly and tug as a flag in the wind;

Liks a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,
  Hunted to death in its galleries blind;
And swift little troops of silent sparks,
  Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,
Go threading the soot-forest's tangled darks
  Like herds of startled deer.

III.

But the wind without was eager and sharp,
Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp,
    And rattles and wrings
    The icy strings,
  Singing, in dreary monotone,
  A Christmas carol of its own,
  Whose burden still, as he might guess,
  Was — "Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless!"
The voice of the seneschal flared like a torch
As he shouted the wanderer away from the porch,
And he sat in the gateway and saw all night
  The great hall-fire, so cheery and bold,
  Through the window-slits of the castle old,
Build out its piers of ruddy light
Against the drift of the cold.

PART SECOND.

I.

THERE was never a leaf on bush or tree,
The bare boughs rattled shudderingly;

The river was dumb and could not speak,
For the weaver Winter its shroud had spun;
A single crow on the tree-top bleak
From his shining feathers shed off the cold sun;
Again it was morning, but shrunk and cold,
As if her veins were sapless and old,
And she rose up decrepitly
For a last dim look at earth and sea.

II.

Sir Launfal turned from his own hard gate,
For another heir in his earldom sate;
An old, bent man, worn out and frail,
He came back from seeking the Holy Grail;
Little he recked of his earldom's loss,
No more on his surcoat was blazoned the cross
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

III.

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spare
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbed air,
For it was just at the Christmas time;
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier clime,
And sought for a shelter from cold and snow
In the light and warmth of long-ago;
He sees the snake-like caravan crawl
O'er the edge of the desert, black and small,
Then nearer and nearer, till, one by one,

He can count the camels in the sun,
As over the red-hot sands they pass
To where, in its slender necklace of grass,
The little spring laughed and leapt in the shade,
And with its own self like an infant played,
And waved its signal of palms.

IV.

"For Christ's sweet sake, I beg an alms;" —
The happy camels may reach the spring,
But Sir Launfal sees only the grewsome thing,
The leper, lank as the rain-blanched bone,
That cowers beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas,
In the desolate horror of his disease.

V

And Sir Launfal said, — "I behold in thee
An image of Him who died on the tree;
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns, —
Thou also hast had the world's buffets and scorns, —
And to thy life were not denied
The wounds in the hands and feet and side:
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;
Behold, through him, I give to thee!"

VI.

Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway he

Remembered in what a haughtier guise
He had flung an alms to leprosie,
When he girt his young life up in gilded mail
And set forth in search of the Holy Grail.
The heart within him was ashes and dust;
He parted in twain his single crust,
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
And gave the leper to eat and drink,
'Twas a mouldy crust of coarse brown bread,
'Twas water out of a wooden bowl, —
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,
And 'twas red wine he drank with his thirsty soul

VII.

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
A light shone round about the place;
The leper no longer crouched at his side,
But stood before him glorified,
Shining and tall and fair and straight
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate, —
Himself the Gate whereby men can
Enter the temple of God in Man.

VIII.

His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine,
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,
That mingle their softness and quiet in one
With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;
And the voice that was softer than silence said,

"Lo it is I, be not afraid!
In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold, it is here, — this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water his blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

IX.

Sir Launfal awoke as from a swound:
"The Grail in my castle here is found
Hang my idle armor up on the wall,
Let it be the spider's banquet-hall;
He must be fenced with stronger mail
Who would seek and find the Holy Grail."

X.

The castle gate stands open now,
And the wanderer is welcome to the hall
As the hangbird is to the elm-tree bough;
No longer scowl the turrets tall,
The Summer's long siege at last is o'er;
When the first poor outcast went in at the door,

She entered with him in disguise,
And mastered the fortress by surprise;
There is no spot she loves so well on ground,
She lingers and smiles there the whole year round;
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land
Has hall and bower at his command;
And there's no poor man in the North Countree
But is lord of the earldom as much as he.

NOTE. — According to the mythology of the Romancers, the San Greal, or Holy Grail, was the cup out of which Jesus partook of the Last Supper with his disciples. It was brought into England by Joseph of Arimathea, and remained there, an object of pilgrimage and adoration, for many years in the keeping of his lineal descendants. It was incumbent upon those who had charge of it to be chaste in thought, word, and deed; but one of the keepers having broken this condition, the Holy Grail disappeared. From that time it was a favorite enterprise of the knights of Arthur's court to go in search of it. Sir Galahad was at last successful in finding it, as may be read in the seventeenth book of the *Romance of King Arthur*. Tennyson has made Sir Galahad the subject of one of the most exquisite of his poems.

The plot (if I may give that name to anything so slight) of the foregoing poem is my own, and, to serve its purposes, I have enlarged the circle of competition in search of the miraculous cup in such a manner as to include, not only other persons than the heroes of the Round Table, but also a period of time subsequent to the supposed date of King Arthur's reign.

PROMETHEUS.

One after one the stars have risen and set,
Sparkling upon the hoarfrost on my chain:
The Bear, that prowled all night about the fold
Of the North-star, hath shrunk into his den,
Scared by the blithesome footsteps of the Dawn,
Whose blushing smile floods all the Orient;
And now bright Lucifer grows less and less,
Into the heaven's blue quiet deep-withdrawn.
Sunless and starless all, the desert sky
Arches above me, empty as this heart
For ages hath been empty of all joy,
Except to brood upon its silent hope,
As o'er its hope of day the sky doth now.
All night have I heard voices: deeper yet
The deep low breathing of the silence grew,
While all about, muffled in awe, there stood
Shadows, or forms, or both, clear-felt at heart,
But, when I turned to front them, far along
Only a shudder through the midnight ran,
And the dense stillness walled me closer round.
But still I heard them wander up and down
That solitude, and flappings of dusk wings
Did mingle with them, whether of those hags
Let slip upon me once from Hades deep,
Or of yet direr torments, if such be,
I could but guess; and then toward me came

A shape as of a woman: very pale
It was, and calm; its cold eyes did not move,
And mine moved not, but only stared on them.
Their fixëd awe went through my brain like ice;
A skeleton hand seemed clutching at my heart,
And a sharp chill, as if a dank night fog
Suddenly closed me in, was all I felt:
And then, methought, I heard a freezing sigh,
A long, deep, shivering sigh, as from blue lips
Stiffening in death, close to mine ear. I thought
Some doom was close upon me, and I looked
And saw the red moon through the heavy mist,
Just setting, and it seemed as it were falling,
Or reeling to its fall, so dim and dead
And palsy-struck it looked. Then all sounds merged
Into the rising surges of the pines,
Which, leagues below me, clothing the gaunt loins
Of ancient Caucasus with hairy strength,
Sent up a murmur in the morning wind,
Sad as the wail that from the populous earth
All day and night to high Olympus soars,
Fit incense to thy wicked throne, O Jove!

Thy hated name is tossed once more in scorn
From off my lips, for I will tell thy doom.
And are these tears? Nay, do not triumph, Jove!
They are wrung from me but by the agonies
Of prophecy, like those sparse drops which fall
From clouds in travail of the lightning, when

The great wave of the storm high-curled and black
Rolls steadily onward to its thunderous break.
Why art thou made a god of, thou poor type
Of anger, and revenge, and cunning force?
True Power was never born of brutish Strength,
Nor sweet Truth suckled at the shaggy dugs
Of that old she-wolf. Are thy thunderbolts,
That quell the darkness for a space, so strong
As the prevailing patience of meek Light,
Who, with the invincible tenderness of peace,
Wins it to be a portion of herself?
Why art thou made a god of, thou, who hast
The never-sleeping terror at thy heart,
That birthright of all tyrants, worse to bear
Than this thy ravening bird on which I smile?
Thou swear'st to free me if I will unfold
What kind of doom it is whose omen flits
Across thy heart, as o'er a troop of doves
The fearful shadow of the kite. What need
To know that truth whose knowledge cannot save?
Evil its errand hath, as well as Good;
When thine is finished, thou art known no more:
There is a higher purity than thou,
And higher purity is greater strength,
Thy nature is thy doom, at which thy heart
Trembles behind the thick wall of thy might.
Let man but hope, and thou art straightway chilled
With thought of that drear silence and deep night
Which, like a dream, shall swallow thee and thine:

Let man but will, and thou art god no more,
More capable of ruin than the gold
And ivory that image thee on earth.
He who hurled down the monstrous Titan-brood
Blinded with lightnings, with rough thunders stunned,
Is weaker than a simple human thought.
My slender voice can shake thee, as the breeze,
That seems but apt to stir a maiden's hair,
Sways huge Oceanus from pole to pole;
For I am still Prometheus, and foreknow
In my wise heart the end and doom of all.

Yes, I am still Prometheus, wiser grown
By years of solitude, — that holds apart
The past and future, giving the soul room
To search into itself, — and long commune
With this eternal silence; — more a god,
In my long-suffering and strength to meet
With equal front the direst shafts of fate,
Than thou in thy faint-hearted despotism,
Girt with thy baby-toys of force and wrath.
Yes, I am that Prometheus who brought down
The light to man, which thou, in selfish fear,
Hadst to thyself usurped, — his by sole right,
For Man hath right to all save Tyranny, —
And which shall free him yet from thy frail throne.
Tyrants are but the spawn of Ignorance,
Begotten by the slaves they trample on,
Who, could they win a glimmer of the light,

And see that Tyranny is always weakness,
Or Fear with its own bosom ill at ease,
Would laugh away in scorn the sand-wove chain
Which their own blindness feigned for adamant.
Wrong ever builds on quicksands, but the Right
To the firm centre lays its moveless base.
The tyrant trembles, if the air but stir
The innocent ringlets of a child's free hair,
And crouches, when the thought of some great spirit,
With world-wide murmur, like a rising gale,
Over men's hearts, as over standing corn,
Rushes, and bends them to its own strong will.
So shall some thought of mine yet circle earth,
And puff away thy crumbling altars, Jove!

And, wouldst thou know of my supreme revenge,
Poor tyrant, even now dethroned in heart,
Realmless in soul, as tyrants ever are,
Listen! and tell me if this bitter peak,
This never-glutted vulture, and these chains
Shrink not before it; for it shall befit
A sorrow-taught, unconquered Titan-heart.
Men, when their death is on them, seem to stand
On a precipitous crag that overhangs
The abyss of doom, and in that depth to see,
As in a glass, the features dim and vast
Of things to come, the shadows, as it seems,
Of what have been. Death ever fronts the wise;
Not fearfully, but with clear promises

Of larger life, on whose broad vans upborne,
Their outlook widens, and they see beyond
The horizon of the Present and the Past,
Even to the very source and end of things.
Such am I now: immortal woe hath made
My heart a seer, and my soul a judge
Between the substance and the shadow of Truth.
The sure supremeness of the Beautiful,
By all the martyrdoms made doubly sure
Of such as I am, this is my revenge,
Which of my wrongs builds a triumphal arch.
Through which I see a sceptre and a throne,
The pipings of glad shepherds on the hills,
Tending the flocks no more to bleed for thee, —
The songs of maidens pressing with white feet
The vintage on thine altars poured no more, —
The murmurous bliss of lovers, underneath
Dim grapevine bowers, whose rosy bunches press
Not half so closely their warm cheeks, unpaled
By thoughts of thy brute lust, — the hive-like hum
Of peaceful commonwealths, where sunburnt Toil
Reaps for itself the rich earth made its own
By its own labor, lightened with glad hymns
To an omnipotence which thy mad bolts
Would cope with as a spark with the vast sea, —
Even the spirit of free love and peace,
Duty's sure recompense through life and death, —
These are such harvests as all master-spirits
Reap, haply not on earth, but reap no less

Because the sheaves are bound by hands not theirs;
These are the bloodless daggers wherewithal
They stab fallen tyrants, this their high revenge:
For their best part of life on earth is when,
Long after death, prisoned and pent no more,
Their thoughts, their wild dreams even, have become
Part of the necessary air men breathe:
When, like the moon, herself behind a cloud,
They shed down light before us on life's sea,
That cheers us to steer onward still in hope.
Earth with her twining memories ivies o'er
Their holy sepulchres; the chainless sea,
In tempest or wide calm, repeats their thoughts;
The lightning and the thunder, all free things,
Have legends of them for the ears of men.
All other glories are as falling stars,
But universal Nature watches theirs:
Such strength is won by love of human kind.

Not that I feel that hunger after fame,
Which souls of a half-greatness are beset with;
But that the memory of noble deeds
Cries shame upon the idle and the vile,
And keeps the heart of Man forever up
To the heroic level of old time.
To be forgot at first is little pain
To a heart conscious of such high intent
As must be deathless on the lips of men;
But, having been a name, to sink and be

A something which the world can do without,
Which, having been or not, would never change
The lightest pulse of fate, — this is indeed
A cup of bitterness the worst to taste,
And this thy heart shall empty to the dregs.
Endless despair shall be thy Caucasus,
And memory thy vulture; thou wilt find
Oblivion far lonelier than this peak.
Behold thy destiny! Thou think'st it much
That I should brave thee, miserable god!
But I have braved a mighter than thou,
Even the tempting of this soaring heart,
Which might have made me, scarcely less than thou,
A god among my brethren weak and blind,
Scarce less than thou, a pitiable thing
To be down-trodden into darkness soon.
But now I am above thee, for thou art
The bungling workmanship of fear, the block
The awes the swart Barbarian; but I
Am what myself have made, — a nature wise
With finding in itself the types of all,
With watching from the dim verge of the time
What things to be are visible in the gleams
Thrown forward on them from the luminous past,
Wise with the history of its own frail heart,
With reverence and with sorrow, and with love,
Broad as the world, for freedom and for man.

Thou and all strength shall crumble, except Love,

By whom, and for whose glory, ye shall cease:
And, when thou'rt but a weary moaning heard
From out the pitiless gloom of Chaos, I
Shall be a power and a memory,
A name to fright all tyrants with, a light
Unsetting as the pole-star, a great voice
Heard in the breathless pauses of the fight
By truth and freedom ever waged with wrong,
Clear as a silver trumpet, to awake
Far echoes that from age to age live on
In kindred spirits, giving them a sense
Of boundless power from boundless suffering wrung:
And many a glazing eye shall smile to see
The memory of my triumph (for to meet
Wrong with endurance, and to overcome
The present with a heart that looks beyond,
Are triumph), like a prophet eagle, perch
Upon the sacred banner of the Right.
Evil springs up, and flowers, and bears no seed,
And feeds the green earth with its swift decay,
Leaving it richer for the growth of truth;
But Good, once put in action or in thought,
Like a strong oak, doth from its boughs shed down
The ripe germs of a forest. Thou, weak god,
Shalt fade and be forgotten! but this soul,
Fresh-living still in the serene abyss,
In every heaving shall partake, that grows
From heart to heart among the sons of men, —
As the ominous hum before the earthquake runs

Far through the Ægean from roused isle to isle, —
Foreboding wreck to palaces and shrines,
And mighty rents in many a cavernous error
That darkens the free light to man : — This heart,
Unscarred by thy grim vulture, as the truth
Grows but more lovely 'neath the beaks and claws
Of Harpies blind that fain would soil it, shall
In all the throbbing exultations share
That wait on freedom's triumphs, and in all
The glorious agonies of martyr-spirits,
Sharp lightning-throes to split the jagged clouds
That veil the future, showing them the end,
Pain's thorny crown for constancy and truth,
Girding the temples like a wreath of stars.
This is a thought, that, like the fabled laurel,
Makes my faith thunder-proof ; and thy dread bolts
Fall on me like the silent flakes of snow
On the hoar brows of aged Caucasus :
But, oh thought far more blissful, they can rend
This cloud of flesh, and make my soul a star!

Unleash thy crouching thunders now, O Jove!
Free this high heart, which, a poor captive long,
Doth knock to be let forth, this heart which still,
In its invincible manhood, overtops
Thy puny godship, as this mountain doth
The pines that moss its roots. O, even now,
While from my peak of suffering I look down,
Beholding with a far-spread gush of hope

The sunrise of that Beauty, in whose face,
Shone all around with love, no man shall look
But straightway like a god he be uplift
Unto the throne long empty for his sake,
And clearly oft foreshadowed in brave dreams
By his free inward nature, which nor thou,
Nor any anarch after thee, can bind
From working its great doom, — now, now set free
This essence, not to die, but to become
Part of that awful Presence which doth haunt
The palaces of tyrants, to scare off,
With its grim eyes and fearful whisperings
And hideous sense of utter loneliness,
All hope of safety, all desire of peace,
All but the loathed forefeeling of blank death, —
Part of that spirit which doth ever brood
In patient calm on the unpilfered nest
Of man's deep heart, till mighty thoughts grow fledged
To sail with darkening shadow o'er the world,
Filling with dread such souls as dare not trust
In the unfailing energy of Good,
Until they swoop, and their pale quarry make
Of some o'erbloated wrong, — that spirit which
Scatters great hopes in the seed-field of man,
Like acorns among grain, to grow and be
A roof for freedom in all coming time!

But no, this cannot be; for ages yet,
In solitude unbroken, shall I hear

The angry Caspian to the Euxine shout,
And Euxine answer with a muffled roar,
On either side storming the giant walls
Of Caucasus with leagues of climbing foam
(Less, from my height, than flakes of downy snow),
That draw back baffled but to hurl again,
Snatched up in wrath and horrible turmoil,
Mountain on mountain, as the Titans erst,
My brethren, scaling the high seat of Jove,
Heaved Pelion upon Ossa's shoulders broad
In vain emprise. The moon will come and go
With her monotonous vicissitude;
Once beautiful, when I was free to walk
Among my fellows, and to interchange
The influence benign of loving eyes,
But now by aged use grown wearisome; —
False thought! most false! for how could I endure
These crawling centuries of lonely woe
Unshamed by weak complaining, but for thee,
Loneliest, save me, of all created things,
Mild-eyed Astarte, my best comforter,
With thy pale smile of sad benignity?

Year after year will pass away and seem
To me, in mine eternal agony,
But as the shadows of dumb summer clouds,
Which I have watched so often darkening o'er
The vast Sarmatian plain, league-wide at first,
But, with still swiftness, lessening on and on

Till cloud and shadow meet and mingle where
The gray horizon fades into the sky,
Far, far to northward. Yes, for ages yet
Must I lie here upon my altar huge,
A sacrifice for man. Sorrow will be,
As it hath been, his portion; endless doom,
While the immortal with the mortal linked
Dreams of its wings and pines for what it dreams,
With upward yearn unceasing. Better so:
For wisdom is stern sorrow's patient child,
And empire over self, and all the deep
Strong charities that make men seem like gods;
And love, that makes them be gods, from her breasts
Sucks in the milk that makes mankind one blood.
Good never comes unmixed, or so it seems,
Having two faces, as some images
Are carved, of foolish gods; one face is ill;
But one heart lies beneath, and that is good,
As are all hearts, when we explore their depths.
Therefore, great heart, bear up! thou art but type
Of what all lofty spirits endure, that fain
Would win men back to strength and peace through love:
Each hath his lonely peak, and on each heart
Envy, or scorn, or hatred, tears lifelong
With vulture beak; yet the high soul is left;
And faith, which is but hope grown wise, and love
And patience which at last shall overcome.

1843.

THE PRESENT CRISIS.

I.

When a deed is done for Freedom, through the broad
earth's aching breast
Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on from east to
west,
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels the soul within
him climb
To the awful verge of manhood, as the energy sublime
Of a century bursts full-blossomed on the thorny stem of
Time.

II.

Through the walls of hut and palace shoots the instan-
taneous throe,
When the travail of the Ages wrings earth's systems to
and fro;
At the birth of each new Era, with a recognizing start,
Nation wildly looks at nation, standing with mute lips
apart,
And glad Truth's yet mightier man-child leaps beneath
the Future's heart. 10

III.

So the Evil's triumph sendeth, with a terror and a
chill,
Under continent to continent, the sense of coming ill,

And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels his sympathies with God
In hot tear-drops ebbing earthward, to be drunk up by the sod,
Till a corpse crawls round unburied, delving in the nobler clod.

IV.

For mankind are one in spirit, and an instinct bears along,
Round the earth's electric circle, the swift flash of right or wrong;
Whether conscious or unconscious, yet Humanity's vast frame
Through its ocean-sundered fibres feels the gush of joy or shame; —
In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal claim.

V.

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right,
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.

VI.

Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose party thou shalt stand,
Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes the dust against our land?
Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 'tis Truth alone is strong,
And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see around her throng
Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield her from all wrong.

VII.

Backward look across the ages and the beacon-moments see,
That, like peaks of some sunk continent, jut through Oblivion's sea;
Not an ear in court or market for the low foreboding cry
Of those Crises, God's stern winnowers, from whose feet earth's chaff must fly;
Never shows the choice momentous till the judgment hath passed by.

VIII.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word;

Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne, —
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.

IX.

We see dimly in the Present what is small and what is great,
Slow of faith, how weak an arm may turn the iron helm of fate,
But the soul is still oracular; amid the market's din,
List the ominous stern whisper from the Delphic cave within, —
"They enslave their children's children who make compromise with sin."

X.

Slavery, the earth-born Cyclops, fellest of the giant brood,
Sons of brutish Force and Darkness, who have drenched the earth with blood,
Famished in his self-made desert, blinded by our purer day,
Gropes in yet unblasted regions for his miserable prey; —
Shall we guide his gory fingers where our helpless children play?

XI.

Then to side with Truth is noble when we share her
wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous
to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward
stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified,
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they had
denied.

XII.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes, — they were souls
that stood alone,
While the men they agonized for hurled the contumelious stone,
Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam
incline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith
divine,
By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's
supreme design. 60

XIII.

By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding feet I
track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the cross that turns
not back,

And these mounts of anguish number how each generation learned
One new word of that grand *Credo* which in prophet-hearts hath burned
Since the first man stood God-conquered with his face to heaven upturned.

XIV.

For Humanity sweeps onward: where to-day the martyr stands,
On the morrow crouches Judas with the silver in his hands;
Far in front the cross stands ready and the crackling fagots burn,
While the hooting mob of yesterday in silent awe return
To glean up the scattered ashes into History's golden urn.

XV.

'Tis as easy to be heroes as to sit the idle slaves
Of a legendary virtue carved upon our fathers' graves,
Worshippers of light ancestral make the present light a crime; —
Was the Mayflower launched by cowards, steered by men behind their time?
Turn those tracks toward Past or Future, that make Plymouth Rock sublime?

XVI.

They were men of present valor, stalwart old iconoclasts,
Unconvinced by axe or gibbet that all virtue was the Past's;
But we make their truth our falsehood, thinking that hath made us free,
Hoarding it in mouldy parchments, while our tender spirits flee
The rude grasp of that great Impulse which drove them across the sea.

XVII.

They have rights who dare maintain them; we are traitors to our sires,
Smothering in their holy ashes Freedom's new-lit altar fires;
Shall we make their creed our jailer? Shall we, in our haste to slay,
From the tombs of the old prophets steal the funeral lamps away
To light up the martyr-fagots round the prophets of to-day?

XVIII.

New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth;

Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we ourselves must
Pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the
desperate winter sea,
Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-
rusted key.

December, 1844.

THE FATHERLAND.

I.

Where is the true man's fatherland?
Is it where he by chance is born?
Doth not the yearning spirit scorn
In such scant borders to be spanned?
O yes! his fatherland must be
As the blue heaven wide and free!

II.

Is it alone where freedom is,
Where God is God and man is man?
Doth he not claim a broader span
For the soul's love of home than this?
O yes! his fatherland must be
As the blue heaven wide and free!

III.

Where'er a human heart doth wear
Joy's myrtle-wreath or sorrow's gyves,

Where'er a human spirit strives
After a life more true and fair,
There is the true man's birthplace grand,
His is a world-wide fatherland!

IV.

Where'er a single slave doth pine,
Where'er one man may help another, —
Thank God for such a birthright, brother, —
That spot of earth is thine and mine!
There is the true man's birthplace grand,
His is a world-wide fatherland

AN INDIAN-SUMMER REVERIE.

I.

What visionary tints the year puts on,
When falling leaves falter through motionless air
Or numbly cling and shiver to be gone!
How shimmer the low flats and pastures bare,
As with her nectar Hebe Autumn fills
The bowl between me and those distant hills,
And smiles and shakes abroad her misty, tremulous hair!

II.

No more the landscape holds its wealth apart,
Making me poorer in my poverty,
But mingles with my senses and my heart;

My own projected spirit seems to me
In her own reverie the world to steep;
'Tis she that waves to sympathetic sleep,
Moving, as she is moved, each field and hill and tree.

III.

How fuse and mix, with what unfelt degrees,
Clasped by the faint horizon's languid arms,
Each into each, the hazy distances!
The softened season all the landscape charms;
Those hills, my native village that embay,
In waves of dreamier purple roll away,
And floating in mirage seem all the glimmering farms.

IV.

Far distant sounds the hidden chickadee
Close at my side; far distant sound the leaves;
The fields seem fields of dream, where Memory
Wanders like gleaning Ruth; and as the sheaves
Of wheat and barley wavered in the eye
Of Boaz as the maiden's glow went by,
So tremble and seem remote all things the sense receives.

V.

The cock's shrill trump that tells of scattered corn,
Passed breezily on by all his flapping mates,
Faint and more faint, from barn to barn is borne,
Southward, perhaps to far Magellan's Straits;

Dimly I catch the throb of distant flails;
Silently overhead the hen-hawk sails,
With watchful, measuring eye, and for his quarry waits.

VI.

The sobered robin, hunger-silent now,
Seeks cedar-berries blue, his autumn cheer;
The chipmunk, on the shingly shagbark's bough,
Now saws, now lists with downward eye and ear,
Then drops his nut, and, cheeping, with a bound
Whisks to his winding fastness underground;
The clouds like swans drift down the streaming atmosphere.

VII.

O'er yon bare knoll the pointed cedar shadows
Drowse on the crisp, gray moss; the ploughman's call
Creeps faint as smoke from black, fresh-furrowed meadows;
The single crow a single caw lets fall;
And all around me every bush and tree
Says Autumn's here, and Winter soon will be,
Who snows his soft, white sleep and silence over all.

VIII.

The birch, most shy and ladylike of trees,
Her poverty, as best she may, retrieves,
And hints at her foregone gentilities

With some saved relics of her wealth of leaves;
The swamp-oak, with his royal purple on,
Glares red as blood across the sinking sun,
As one who proudlier to a falling fortune cleaves.

IX.

He looks a sachem, in red blanket wrapt,
Who, mid some council of the sad-garbed whites,
Erect and stern, in his own memories lapt,
With distant eye broods over other sights,
Sees the hushed wood the city's flare replace,
The wounded turf heal o'er the railway's trace,
And roams the savage Past of his undwindled rights.

X.

The red-oak, softer-grained, yields all for lost,
And, with his crumpled foliage stiff and dry,
After the first betrayal of the frost,
Rebuffs the kiss of the relenting sky;
The chestnuts, lavish of their long-hid gold,
To the faint Summer, beggared now and old,
Pour back the sunshine hoarded 'neath her favoring eye.

XI.

The ash her purple drops forgivingly
And sadly, breaking not the general hush;
The maple-swamps glow like a sunset sea,

Each leaf a ripple with its separate flush;
All round the wood's edge creeps the skirting blaze
Of bushes low, as when, on cloudy days,
Ere the rain fall, the cautious farmer burns his brush.

XII.

O'er yon low wall, which guards one unkempt zone,
Where vines and weeds and scrub-oaks intertwine
Safe from the plough, whose rough, discordant stone
Is massed to one soft gray by lichens fine,
The tangled blackberry, crossed and recrossed, weaves
A prickly network of ensanguined leaves;
Hard by, with coral beads, the prim black-alders shine.

XIII.

Pillaring with flame this crumbling boundary,
Whose loose blocks topple 'neath the ploughboy's foot,
Who, with each sense shut fast except the eye,
Creeps close and scares the jay he hoped to shoot,
The woodbine up the elm's straight stem aspires,
Coiling it, harmless, with autumnal fires;
In the ivy's paler blaze the martyr oak stands mute.

XIV.

Below, the Charles — a stripe of nether sky,
Now hid by rounded apple-trees between,

Whose gaps the misplaced sail sweeps bellying by,
Now flickering golden through a woodland screen,
Then spreading out, at his next turn beyond,
A silver circle like an inland pond —
Slips seaward silently through marshes purple and green.

XV.

Dear marshes! vain to him the gift of sight
Who cannot in their various incomes share,
From every season drawn, of shade and light,
Who sees in them but levels brown and bare;
Each change of storm or sunshine scatters free
On them its largess of variety,
For Nature with cheap means still works her wonders rare.

XVI.

In Spring they lie one broad expanse of green,
O'er which the light winds run with glimmering feet:
Here, yellower stripes track out the creek unseen,
There, darker growths o'er hidden ditches meet;
And purpler stains show where the blossoms crowd,
As if the silent shadow of a cloud
Hung there becalmed, with the next breath to fleet.

XVII.

All round, upon the river's slippery edge,
Witching to deeper calm the drowsy tide,

Whispers and leans the breeze-entangling sedge;
Through emerald glooms the lingering waters slide,
Or, sometimes wavering, throw back the sun,
And the stiff banks in eddies melt and run
Of dimpling light, and with the current seem to glide.

XVIII.

In Summer 'tis a blithesome sight to see,
As, step by step, with measured swing, they pass,
The wide-ranked mowers wading to the knee,
Their sharp scythes panting through the wiry grass;
Then, stretched beneath a rick's shade in a ring,
Their nooning take, while one begins to sing
A stave that droops and dies 'neath the close sky of brass.

XIX.

Meanwhile that devil-may-care, the bobolink,
Remembering duty, in mid-quaver stops
Just ere he sweeps o'er rapture's tremulous brink,
And 'twixt the winrows most demurely drops,
A decorous bird of business, who provides
For his brown mate and fledglings six besides,
And looks from right to left, a farmer mid his crops.

XX.

Another change subdues them in the Fall,
But saddens not; they still show merrier tints,

Though sober russet seems to cover all;
When the first sunshine through their dew-drops glints,
Look how the yellow clearness, streamed across,
Redeems with rarer hues the season's loss,
As Dawn's feet there had touched and left their rosy prints.

XXI.

Or come when sunset gives its freshened zest,
Lean o'er the bridge and let the ruddy thrill,
While the shorn sun swells down the hazy west,
Glow opposite; — the marshes drink their fill
And swoon with purple veins, then slowly fade
Through pink to brown, as eastward moves the shade,
Lengthening with stealthy creep, of Simond's darkening hill.

XXII.

Later, and yet ere Winter wholly shuts,
Ere through the first dry snow the runner grates,
And the loath cart-wheel screams in slippery ruts,
While firmer ice the eager boy awaits,
Trying each buckle and strap beside the fire,
And until bedtime plays with his desire,
Twenty times putting on and off his new-bought skates; —

XXIII.

Then, every morn, the river's banks shine bright
With smooth plate-armor, treacherous and frail,
By the frost's clinking hammers forged at night,
'Gainst which the lances of the sun prevail,
Giving a pretty emblem of the day
When guiltier arms in light shall melt away,
And states shall move free-limbed, loosed from war's cramping mail.

XXIV.

And now those waterfalls the ebbing river
Twice every day creates on either side
Tinkle, as through their fresh-sparred grots they shiver
In grass-arched channels to the sun denied;
High flaps in sparkling blue the far-heard crow,
The silvered flats gleam frostily below,
Suddenly drops the gull and breaks the glassy tide.

XXV.

But crowned in turn by vying seasons three,
Their winter halo hath a fuller ring;
This glory seems to rest immovably, —
The others were too fleet and vanishing;
When the hid tide is at its highest flow,
O'er marsh and stream one breathless trance of snow
With brooding fulness awes and hushes everything.

XXVI.

The sunshine seems blown off by the bleak wind,
As pale as formal candles lit by day;
Gropes to the sea the river dumb and blind;
The brown ricks, snow-thatched by the storm in play,
Show pearly breakers combing o'er their lee,
White crests as of some just enchanted sea,
Checked in their maddest leap and hanging poised midway.

XXVII.

But when the eastern blow, with rain aslant,
From mid-sea's prairies green and rolling plains
Drives in his wallowing herds of billows gaunt,
And the roused Charles remembers in his veins
Old Ocean's blood and snaps his gyves of frost,
That tyrannous silence on the shores is tost
In dreary wreck, and crumbling desolation reigns.

XXVIII.

Edgewise or flat, in Druid-like device,
With leaden pools between or gullies bare,
The blocks lie strewn, a bleak Stonehenge of ice;
No life, no sound, to break the grim despair,
Save sullen plunge, as through the sedges stiff
Down crackles riverward some thaw-sapped cliff,
Or when the close-wedged fields of ice crunch here and there.

XXIX.

But let me turn from fancy-pictured scenes
To that whose pastoral calm before me lies:
Here nothing harsh or rugged intervenes;
The early evening with her misty dyes
Smooths off the ravelled edges of the nigh,
Relieves the distant with her cooler sky,
And tones the landscape down, and soothes the wearied eyes.

XXX.

There gleams my native village, dear to me,
Though higher change's waves each day are seen,
Whelming fields famed in boyhood's history,
Sanding with houses the diminished green;
There, in red brick, which softening time defies,
Stand square and stiff the Muses' factories; —
How with my life knit up is every well-known scene!

XXXI.

Flow on, dear river! not alone you flow
To outward sight, and through your marshes wind;
Fed from the mystic springs of long-ago,
Your twin flows silent through my world of mind:
Grow dim, dear marshes, in the evening's gray!
Before my inner sight ye stretch away,
And will forever, though these fleshly eyes grow blind.

XXXII.

Beyond the hillock's house-bespotted swell,
Where Gothic chapels house the horse and chaise,
Where quiet cits in Grecian temples dwell,
Where Coptic tombs resound with prayer and praise,
Where dust and mud the equal year divide,
There gentle Allston lived, and wrought, and died,
Transfiguring street and shop with his illumined gaze.

XXXIII.

Virgilium vidi tantum, — I have seen
But as a boy, who looks alike on all,
That misty hair, that fine Undine-like mien,
Tremulous as down to feeling's faintest call; —
Ah, dear old homestead! count it to thy fame
That thither many times the Painter came; —
One elm yet bears his name, a feathery tree and tall.

XXXIV.

Swiftly the present fades in memory's glow, —
Our only sure possession is the past;
The village blacksmith died a month ago,
And dim to me the forge's roaring blast;
Soon fire-new mediævals we shall see
Oust the black smithy from its chestnut-tree,
And that hewn down, perhaps, the bee-hive green and vast.

XXXV.

How many times, prouder than king on throne,
Loosed from the village school-dame's A's and B's,
Panting have I the creaky bellows blown,
And watched the pent volcano's red increase,
Then paused to see the ponderous sledge, brought down
By that hard arm voluminous and brown,
From the white iron swarm its golden vanishing bees.

XXXVI.

Dear native town! whose choking elms each year
With eddying dust before their time turn gray,
Pining for rain, — to me thy dust is dear;
It glorifies the eve of summer day,
And when the westering sun half sunken burns,
The mote-thick air to deepest orange turns,
The westward horseman rides through clouds of gold away,

XXXVII.

So palpable, I've seen those unshorn few,
The six old willows at the causey's end
(Such trees Paul Potter never dreamed nor drew),
Through this dry mist their checkering shadows send,
Striped, here and there, with many a long-drawn thread,
Where streamed through leafy chinks the trembling red,

Past which, in one bright trail, the hangbird's flashes blend.

XXXVIII.

Yes, dearer far thy dust than all that e'er,
Beneath the awarded crown of victory,
Gilded the blown Olympic charioteer;
Though lightly prized the ribboned parchments three,
Yet *collegisse juvat*, I am glad
That here what colleging was mine I had, —
It linked another tie, dear native town, with thee!

XXXIX.

Nearer art thou than simply native earth,
My dust with thine concedes a deeper tie;
A closer claim thy soil may well put forth,
Something of kindred more than sympathy;
For in thy bounds I reverently laid away
That blinding anguish of forsaken clay,
That title I seemed to have in earth and sea and sky,

XL.

That portion of my life more choice to me
(Though brief, yet in itself so round and whole)
Than all the imperfect residue can be; —
The Artist saw his statue of the soul
Was perfect; so, with one regretful stroke,
The earthen model into fragments broke,
And without her the impoverished seasons roll.

SONG.

I.

Violet! sweet violet!
Thine eyes are full of tears;
Are they wet
Even yet
With the thought of other years?
Or with gladness are they full,
For the night so beautiful,
And longing for those far-off spheres?

II.

Loved one of my youth thou wast,
Of my merry youth,
And I see,
Tearfully,
All the fair and sunny past,
All its openness and truth,
Ever fresh and green in thee
As the moss is in the sea.

III.

Thy little heart, that hath with love
Grown colored like the sky above,
On which thou lookest ever, —

Can it know
All the woe
Of hope for what returneth never,
All the sorrow and the longing
To these hearts of ours belonging?

IV.

Out on it! no foolish pining
For the sky
Dims thine eye,
Or for the stars so calmly shining;
Like thee let this soul of mine
Take hue from that wherefor I long,
Self-stayed and high, serene and strong,
Not satisfied with hoping — but divine.

V.

Violet! dear violet!
Thy blue eyes are only wet
With joy and love of Him who sent thee,
And for the fulfilling sense
Of that glad obedience
Which made thee all that Nature meant thee!

1841.

TO THE DANDELION.

I.

Dear common flower, that grow'st beside the way,
Fringing the dusty road with harmless gold,
First pledge of blithesome May,
Which children pluck, and, full of pride uphold,
High-hearted buccaneers, o'erjoyed that they
An Eldorado in the grass have found,
Which not the rich earth's ample round
May match in wealth, thou art more dear to me
Than all the prouder summer-blooms may be.

II.

Gold such as thine ne'er drew the Spanish prow
Through the primeval hush of Indian seas,
Nor wrinkled the lean brow
Of age, to rob the lover's heart of ease;
'Tis the Spring's largess, which she scatters now
To rich and poor alike, with lavish hand,
Though most hearts never understand
To take it at God's value, but pass by
The offered wealth with unrewarded eye.

III.

Thou art my tropics and mine Italy;
To look at thee unlocks a warmer clime;
The eyes thou givest me.

Are in the heart, and heed not space or time:
Not in mid June the golden-cuirassed bee
Feels a more summer-like warm ravishment
In the white lily's breezy tent,
His fragrant Sybaris, than I, when first
From the dark green thy yellow circles burst.

IV.

Then think I of deep shadows on the grass,
Of meadows where in sun the cattle graze,
Where, as the breezes pass,
The gleaming rushes lean a thousand ways,
Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,
Or whiten in the wind, of waters blue
That from the distance sparkle through
Some woodland gap, and of a sky above,
Where one white cloud like a stray lamb doth move.

V.

My childhood's earliest thoughts are linked with thee;
The sight of thee calls back the robin's song.
Who, from the dark old tree
Beside the door, sang clearly all day long,
And I, secure in childish piety,
Listened as if I heard an angel sing
With news from heaven, which he could bring
Fresh every day to my untainted ears
When birds and flowers and I were happy peers.

VI.

How like a prodigal doth nature seem,
When thou, for all thy gold, so common art!
Thou teachest me to deem
More sacredly of every human heart,
Since each reflects in joy its scanty gleam
Of heaven, and could some wondrous secret sho
Did we but pay the love we owe,
And with a child's undoubting wisdom look
On all these living pages of God's book.

A CHIPPEWA LEGEND.[1]

ἀλγεινὰ μέν μοι καὶ λέγειν ἐστὶν τάδε
ἄλγος δὲ σιγᾷν.

ÆSCHYLUS, *Prom. Vinct.* 197, 198.

I.

THE old Chief, feeling now wellnigh his end,
Called his two eldest children to his side,
And gave them, in few words, his parting charge!
"My son and daughter, me ye see no more;
The happy hunting-grounds await me, green
With change of spring and summer through the year:
But, for remembrance, after I am gone,
Be kind to little Sheemah for my sake:
Weakling he is and young, and knows not yet

[1] For the leading incidents in this tale, I am indebted to the very valuable *Algic Researches* of Henry R. Schoolcraft, Esq.

To set the trap, or draw the seasoned bow;
Therefore of both your loves he hath more need,
And he, who needeth love, to love hath right;
It is not like our furs and stores of corn,
Whereto we claim sole title by our toil,
But the Great Spirit plants it in our hearts,
And waters it, and gives it sun, to be
The common stock and heritage of all:
Therefore be kind to Sheemah, that yourselves
May not be left deserted in your need."

II.

Alone, beside a lake, their wigwam stood,
Far from the other dwellings of their tribe
And, after many moons, the loneliness
Wearied the elder brother, and he said,
"Why should I dwell here far from men, shut out
From the free, natural joys that fit my age?
Lo, I am tall and strong, well skilled to hunt,
Patient of toil and hunger, and not yet
Have seen the danger which I dared not look
Full in the face; what hinders me to be
A mighty Brave and Chief among my kin?"
So, taking up his arrows and his bow,
As if to hunt, he journeyed swiftly on,
Until he gained the wigwams of his tribe,
Where, choosing out a bride, he soon forgot,
In all the fret and bustle of new life,
The little Sheemah and his father's charge.

III.

Now when the sister found her brother gone,
And that, for many days, he came not back,
She wept for Sheemah more than for herself;
For Love bides longest in a woman's heart,
And flutters many times before he flies,
And then doth perch so nearly, that a word
May lure him back to his accustomed nest;
And Duty lingers even when Love is gone,
Oft looking out in hope of his return;
And, after Duty hath been driven forth,
Then Selfishness creeps in the last of all,
Warming her lean hands at the lonely hearth,
And crouching o'er the embers, to shut out
Whatever paltry warmth and light are left,
With avaricious greed, from all beside.
So, for long months, the sister hunted wide,
And cared for little Sheemah tenderly;
But, daily more and more, the loneliness
Grew wearisome, and to herself she sighed,
"Am I not fair? at least the glassy pool,
That hath no cause to flatter, tells me so;
But, O, how flat and meaningless the tale,
Unless it tremble on a lover's tongue!
Beauty hath no true glass, except it be
In the sweet privacy of loving eyes."
Thus deemed she idly, and forgot the lore
Which she had learned of nature and the woods,
That beauty's chief reward is to itself,

And that Love's mirror holds no image long
Save of the inward fairness, blurred and lost
Unless kept clear and white by Duty's care.
So she went forth and sought the haunts of men,
And, being wedded, in her household cares,
Soon, like the elder brother, quite forgot
The little Sheemah and her father's charge.

VI.

But Sheemah, left alone within the lodge,
Waited and waited, with a shrinking heart,
Thinking each rustle was his sister's step,
Till hope grew less and less, and then went out,
And every sound was changed from hope to fear.
Few sounds there were: — the dropping of a nut,
The squirrel's chirrup, and the jay's harsh scream,
Autumn's sad remnants of blithe Summer's cheer,
Heard at long intervals, seemed but to make
The dreadful void of silence silenter.
Soon what small store his sister left was gone,
And, through the Autumn, he made shift to live
On roots and berries, gathered in much fear
Of wolves, whose ghastly howl he heard ofttimes,
Hollow and hungry, at the dead of night.
But Winter came at last, and, when the snow,
Thick-heaped for gleaming leagues o'er hill and plain,
Spread its unbroken silence over all,
Made bold by hunger, he was fain to glean
(More sick at heart than Ruth, and all alone)

After the harvest of the merciless wolf,
Grim Boaz, who, sharp-ribbed and gaunt, yet feared
A thing more wild and starving than himself;
Till, by degrees, the wolf and he grew friends,
And shared together all the winter through.

V.

Late in the Spring, when all the ice was gone,
The elder brother, fishing in the lake,
Upon whose edge his father's wigwam stood,
Heard a low moaning noise upon the shore:
Half like a child it seemed, half like a wolf,
And straightway there was something in his heart
That said, "It is thy brother Sheemah's voice."
So, paddling swiftly to the bank, he saw,
Within a little thicket close at hand,
A child that seemed fast changing to a wolf,
From the neck downward, gray with shaggy hair,
That still crept on and upward as he looked.
The face was turned away, but well he knew
That it was Sheemah's, even his brother's face.
Then with his trembling hands he hid his eyes,
And bowed his head, so that he might not see
The first look of his brother's eyes, and cried,
"O Sheemah! O my brother, speak to me!
Dost thou not know me, that I am thy brother?
Come to me, little Sheemah, thou shalt dwell
With me henceforth, and know no care or want!"
Sheemah was silent for a space, as if

'Twere hard to summon up a human voice,
And, when he spake, the voice was as a wolf's:
"I know thee not, nor art thou what thou say'st;
I have none other brethren than the wolves,
And, till thy heart be changed from what it is,
Thou art not worthy to be called their kin."
Then groaned the other, with a choking tongue,
"Alas! my heart is changed right bitterly;
'Tis shrunk and parched within me even now!"
And, looking upward fearfully, he saw
Only a wolf that shrank away and ran,
Ugly and fierce, to hide among the woods.

AMBROSE.

I.

Never, surely, was holier man
Than Ambrose, since the world began;
With diet spare and raiment thin
He shielded himself from the father of sin;
With bed of iron and scourgings oft,
His heart to God's hand as wax made soft.

II.

Through earnest prayer and watchings long
He sought to know 'tween right and wrong,

Much wrestling with the blessed Word
To make it yield the sense of the Lord,
That he might build a storm-proof creed
To fold the flock in at their need.

III.

At last he builded a perfect faith,
Fenced round about with *The Lord thus saith;*
To himself he fitted the doorway's size,
Meted the light to the need of his eyes,
And knew, by a sure and inward sign,
That the work of his fingers was divine.

IV.

Then Ambrose said, "All those shall die
The eternal death who believe not as I,"
And some were boiled, some burned in fire,
Some sawn in twain, that his heart's desire,
For the good of men's souls, might be satisfied
By the drawing of all to the righteous side.

V.

One day, as Ambrose was seeking the truth
In his lonely walk, he saw a youth
Resting himself in the shade of a tree;
It had never been granted him to see
So shining a face, and the good man thought
'Twere pity he should not believe as he ought.

VI.

So he set himself by the young man's side,
And the state of his soul with questions tried;
But the heart of the stranger was hardened indeed,
Nor received the stamp of the one true creed;
And the spirit of Ambrose waxed sore to find
Such features the porch of so narrow a mind.

VII.

"As each beholds in cloud and fire
The shape that answers his own desire,
So each," said the youth, "in the Law shall find
The figure and fashion of his mind;
And to each in his mercy hath God allowed
His several pillar of fire and cloud."

VIII.

The soul of Ambrose burned with zeal
And holy wrath for the young man's weal:
"Believest thou then, most wretched youth,"
Cried he, "a dividual essence in Truth?
I fear me thy heart is too cramped with sin
To take the Lord in his glory in."

IX.

Now there bubbled beside them where they stood
A fountain of waters sweet and good;
The youth to the streamlet's brink drew near
Saying, "Ambrose, thou maker of creeds, look here!"

Six vases of crystal then he took,
And set them along the edge of the brook.

X.

"As into these vessels the water I pour,
There shall one hold less, another more,
And the water unchanged, in every case,
Shall put on the figure of the vase;
O thou, who wouldst unity make through strife,
Canst thou fit this sign to the Water of Life?" 60

XI.

When Ambrose looked up, he stood alone,
The youth and the stream and the vases were gone;
But he knew, by a sense of humbled grace,
He had talked with an angel face to face,
And felt his heart change inwardly,
As he fell on his knees beneath the tree.

EXTREME UNCTION.

I.

Go! leave me, Priest; my soul would be
Alone with the consoler, Death;
Far sadder eyes than thine will see
This crumbling clay yield up its breath;

These shrivelled hands have deeper stains
  Than holy oil can cleanse away,
Hands that have plucked the world's coarse gains
  As erst they plucked the flowers of May.

II.

Call, if thou canst, to these gray eyes
  Some faith from youth's traditions wrung;
This fruitless husk which dustward dries
  Hath been a heart once, hath been young;
On this bowed head the awful Past
  Once laid its consecrating hands;
The Future in its purpose vast
  Paused, waiting my supreme commands.

III.

But look! whose shadows block the door?
  Who are those two that stand aloof?
See! on my hands this freshening gore
  Writes o'er again its crimson proof!
My looked-for death-bed guests are met;
  There my dead Youth doth wring its hands,
And there, with eyes that goad me yet,
  The ghost of my Ideal stands!

IV.

God bends from out the deep and says,
  "I gave thee the great gift of life;
Wast thou not called in many ways?
  Are not my earth and heaven at strife?

I gave thee of my seed to sow,
Bringest thou me my hundred-fold?"
Can I look up with face aglow,
And answer, "Father, here is gold"?

V.

I have been innocent; God knows
When first this wasted life began,
Not grape with grape more kindly grows,
Than I with every brother-man:
Now here I gasp; what lose my kind,
When this fast ebbing breath shall part?
What bands of love and service bind
This being to a brother heart?

VI.

Christ still was wandering o'er the earth
Without a place to lay his head;
He found free welcome at my hearth,
He shared my cup and broke my bread:
Now, when I hear those steps sublime,
That bring the other world to this,
My snake-turned nature, sunk in slime,
Starts sideway with defiant hiss.

VII.

Upon the hour when I was born,
God said, "Another man shall be,"
And the great Maker did not scorn
Out of himself to fashion me;

He sunned me with his ripening looks,
And Heaven's rich instincts in me grew,
As effortless as woodland nooks
Send violets up and paint them blue.

VIII.

Yes, I who now, with angry tears,
Am exiled back to brutish clod,
Have borne unquenched for fourscore years
A spark of the eternal God;
And to what end? How yield I back
The trust for such high uses given?
Heaven's light hath but revealed a track
Whereby to crawl away from heaven.

IX.

Men think it is an awful sight
To see a soul just set adrift
On that drear voyage from whose night
The ominous shadows never lift;
But 'tis more awful to behold
A helpless infant newly born,
Whose little hands unconscious hold
The keys of darkness and of morn.

X.

Mine held them once; I flung away
Those keys that might have open set
The golden sluices of the day,
But clutch the keys of darkness yet;

I hear the reapers singing go
  Into God's harvest; I, that might
With them have chosen, here below
  Grope shuddering at the gates of night. 80

XI.

O glorious Youth, that once wast mine!
  O high Ideal! all in vain
Ye enter at this ruined shrine
  Whence worship ne'er shall rise again;
The bat and owl inhabit here,
  The snake nests in the altar-stone,
The sacred vessels moulder near,
  The image of the God is gone.

A PARABLE.

I.

Said Christ our Lord, "I will go and see
How the men, my brethren, believe in me."
He passed not again through the gate of birth,
But made himself known to the children of earth.

II.

Then said the chief priests, and rulers, and kings,
"Behold, now, the Giver of all good things;
Go to, let us welcome with pomp and state
Him who alone is mighty and great."

III.

With carpets of gold the ground they spread
Wherever the Son of Man should tread,
And in palace-chambers lofty and rare
They lodged him, and served him with kingly fare.

IV.

Great organs surged through arches dim
Their jubilant floods in praise of him;
And in church, and palace, and judgment-hall,
He saw his own image high over all.

V.

But still, wherever his steps they led,
The Lord in sorrow bent down his head,
And from under the heavy foundation-stones,
The son of Mary heard bitter groans.

VI.

And in church, and palace, and judgment-hall,
He marked great fissures that rent the wall,
And opened wider and yet more wide
As the living foundation heaved and sighed.

VII.

"Have ye founded your thrones and altars, then,
On the bodies and souls of living men?
And think ye that building shall endure,
Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor?

VIII.

"With gates of silver and bars of gold
Ye have fenced my sheep from their Father's fold;
I have heard the dropping of their tears
In heaven these eighteen hundred years."

IX.

"O Lord and Master, not ours the guilt,
We build but as our fathers built;
Behold thine images, how they stand,
Sovereign and sole, through all our land.

X.

"Our task is hard, — with sword and flame
To hold thine earth forever the same,
And with sharp crooks of steel to keep
Still, as thou leftest them, thy sheep."

XI.

Then Christ sought out an artisan,
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,
And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
Pushed from her faintly want and sin.

XII.

These set he in the midst of them,
And as they drew back their garment-hem,
For fear of defilement, "Lo, here," said he,
"The images ye have made of me!"

SONNETS.

I.

TO A. C. L.

THROUGH suffering and sorrow thou hast passed
To show us what a woman true may be:
They have not taken sympathy from thee,
Nor made thee any other than thou wast,
Save as some tree, which, in a sudden blast,
Sheddeth those blossoms, that are weakly grown,
Upon the air, but keepeth every one
Whose strength gives warrant of good fruit at last:
So thou hast shed some blooms of gayety,
But never one of steadfast cheerfulness;
Nor hath thy knowledge of adversity
Robbed thee of any faith in happiness,
But rather cleared thine inner eyes to see
How many simple ways there are to bless.

1840.

II.

WHAT were I, Love, if I were stripped of thee,
If thine eyes shut me out whereby I live,
Thou, who unto my calmer soul dost give
Knowledge, and Truth, and holy Mystery,
Wherein Truth mainly lies for those who see
Beyond the earthly and the fugitive,
Who in the grandeur of the soul believe,

And only in the Infinite are free?
Without thee I were naked, bleak, and bare
As yon dead cedar on the sea-cliff's brow;
And Nature's teachings, which come to me now,
Common and beautiful as light and air,
Would be as fruitless as a stream which still
Slips through the wheel of some old ruined mill.

1841.

III.

I would not have this perfect love of ours
Grow from a single root, a single stem,
Bearing no goodly fruit, but only flowers
That idly hide life's iron diadem:
It should grow alway like that Eastern tree
Whose limbs take root and spread forth constantly;
That love for one, from which there doth not spring
Wide love for all, is but a worthless thing.
Not in another world, as poets prate,
Dwell we apart above the tide of things,
High floating o'er earth's clouds on faery wings;
But our pure love doth ever elevate
Into a holy bond of brotherhood
All earthly things, making them pure and good.

1840.

IV.

"For this true nobleness I seek in vain,
In woman and in man I find it not;
I almost weary of my earthly lot,

My life-springs are dried up with burning pain."
Thou find'st it not? I pray thee look again,
Look *inward* through the depths of thine own soul.
How is it with thee? Art thou sound and whole?
Doth narrow search show thee no earthly stain?
BE NOBLE! and the nobleness that lies
In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own;
Then wilt thou see it gleam in many eyes,
Then will pure light around thy path be shed,
And thou wilt nevermore be sad and lone.

1840.

V.

TO THE SPIRIT OF KEATS.

GREAT soul, thou sittest with me in my room,
Uplifting me with thy vast, quiet eyes,
On whose full orbs, with kindly lustre, lies
The twilight warmth of ruddy ember-gloom:
Thy clear, strong tones will oft bring sudden bloom
Of hope secure, to him who lonely cries,
Wrestling with the young poet's agonies,
Neglect and scorn, which seem a certain doom:
Yes! the few words which, like great thunder-drops,
Thy large heart down to earth shook doubtfully,
Thrilled by the inward lightning of its might,
Serene and pure, like gushing joy of light,
Shall track the eternal chords of Destiny,
After the moon-led pulse of ocean stops.

1841.

VI.

GREAT Truths are portions of the soul of man;
Great souls are portions of Eternity;
Each drop of blood that e'er through true heart ran
With lofty message, ran for thee and me;
For God's law, since the starry song began,
Hath been, and still forevermore must be,
That every deed which shall outlast Time's span
Must spur the soul to be erect and free;
Slave is no word of deathless lineage sprung;
Too many noble souls have thought and died,
Too many mighty poets lived and sung,
And our good Saxon, from lips purified
With martyr-fire, throughout the world hath run
Too long to have God's holy cause denied.

1841.

VII.

I ASK not for those thoughts, that sudden leap
From being's sea, like the isle-seeming Kraken,
With whose great rise the ocean all is shaken
And a heart-tremble quivers through the deep;
Give me that growth which some perchance deem sleep,
Wherewith the steadfast coral-stems uprise,
Which, by the toil of gathering energies,
Their upward way into clear sunshine keep,
Until, by Heaven's sweetest influences,
Slowly and slowly spreads a speck of green
Into a pleasant island in the seas,

Where, mid tall palms, the cane-roofed home is seen,
And wearied men shall sit at sunset's hour,
Hearing the leaves and loving God's dear power.

1841.

VIII.

TO M. W. ON HER BIRTHDAY.

MAIDEN, when such a soul as thine is born,
The morning-stars their ancient music make
And, joyful, once again their song awake,
Long silent now with melancholy scorn;
And thou, not mindless of so blest a morn,
By no least deed its harmony shalt break,
But shalt to that high chime thy footsteps take,
Through life's most darksome passes unforlorn;
Therefore from thy pure faith thou shalt not fall,
Therefore shalt thou be ever fair and free,
And in thine every motion musical
As summer air, majestic as the sea,
A mystery to those who creep and crawl
Through Time, and part it from Eternity.

1841.

IX.

MY LOVE, I have no fear that thou shouldst die;
Albeit I ask no fairer life than this
Whose numbering-clock is still thy gentle kiss,
While Time and Peace with hands enlockëd fly, —
Yet care I not where in Eternity
We live and love, well knowing that there is

No backward step for those who feel the bliss
Of Faith as their most lofty yearnings high:
Love hath so purified my being's core,
Meseems I scarcely should be startled, even,
To find, some morn, that thou hadst gone before;
Since, with thy love, this knowledge too was given,
Which each calm day doth strengthen more and more,
That they who love are but one step from Heaven.

1841.

X.

I CANNOT think that thou shouldst pass away,
Whose life to mine is an eternal law,
A piece of nature that can have no flaw,
A new and certain sunrise every day;
But, if thou art to be another ray
About the Sun of Life, and art to live
Free from what part of thee was fugitive,
The debt of Love I will more fully pay,
Not downcast with the thought of thee so high,
But rather raised to be a nobler man,
And more divine in my humanity,
As knowing that the waiting eyes which scan
My life are lighted by a purer being,
And ask high, calm-browed deeds, with it agreeing.

1841.

XI.

THERE never yet was flower fair in vain,
Let classic poets rhyme it as they will;
The seasons toil that it may blow again,

And summer's heart doth feel its every ill;
Nor is a true soul ever born for naught;
Wherever any such hath lived and died,
There hath been something for true freedom wrought,
Some bulwark levelled on the evil side:
Toil on, then, Greatness! thou art in the right,
However narrow souls may call thee wrong;
Be as thou wouldst be in thine own clear sight,
And so thou shalt be in the world's erelong;
For worldlings cannot, struggle as they may,
From man's great soul one great thought hide away.

1841.

XII.

SUB PONDERE CRESCIT.

THE hope of Truth grows stronger, day by day;
I hear the soul of Man around me waking,
Like a great sea, its frozen fetters breaking,
And flinging up to heaven its sunlit spray,
Tossing huge continents in scornful play,
And crushing them, with din of grinding thunder,
That makes old emptinesses stare in wonder;
The memory of a glory passed away
Lingers in every heart, as, in the shell,
Resounds the bygone freedom of the sea,
And every hour new signs of promise tell,
That the great soul shall once again be free,
For high, and yet more high, the murmurs swell
Of inward strife for truth and liberty.

1841.

XIII.

Beloved, in the noisy city here,
The thought of thee can make all turmoil cease;
Around my spirit, folds thy spirit clear
Its still, soft arms, and circles it with peace;
There is no room for any doubt or fear
In souls so overfilled with love's increase,
There is no memory of the bygone year
But growth in heart's and spirit's perfect ease:
How hath our love, half nebulous at first,
Rounded itself into a full-orbed sun!
How have our lives and wills (as haply erst
They were, ere this forgetfulness begun)
Through all their earthly distances outburst,
And melted, like two rays of light, in one!

1842.

XIV.

ON READING WORDSWORTH'S SONNETS IN DEFENCE OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

As the broad ocean endlessly upheaveth,
With the majestic beating of his heart,
The mighty tides, whereof its rightful part
Each sea-wide bay and little weed receiveth,
So, through his soul who earnestly believeth,
Life from the universal Heart doth flow,
Whereby some conquest of the eternal Woe,
By instinct of God's nature, he achieveth:
A fuller pulse of this all-powerful beauty

Into the poet's gulf-like heart doth tide,
And he more keenly feels the glorious duty
Of serving Truth, despised and crucified, —
Happy, unknowing sect or creed, to rest
And feel God flow forever through his breast.

1842.

XV.

THE SAME CONTINUED.

Once hardly in a cycle blossometh
A flower-like soul ripe with the seeds of song,
A spirit foreordained to cope with wrong,
Whose divine thoughts are natural as breath,
Who the old Darkness thickly scattereth
With starry words, that shoot prevailing light
Into the deeps, and wither, with the blight
Of serene Truth, the coward heart of Death:
Woe, if such spirit thwart its errand high,
And mock with lies the longing soul of man!
Yet one age longer must true Culture lie,
Soothing her bitter fetters as she can,
Until new messages of love outstart
At the next beating of the infinite Heart.

XVI.

THE SAME CONTINUED.

The love of all things springs from love of one;
Wider the soul's horizon hourly grows,
And over it with fuller glory flows

The sky-like spirit of God; a hope begun
In doubt and darkness 'neath a fairer sun
Cometh to fruitage, if it be of Truth;
And to the law of meekness, faith, and ruth,
By inward sympathy, shall all be won:
This thou shouldst know, who, from the painted feature
Of shifting Fashion, couldst thy brethren turn
Unto the love of ever-youthful Nature,
And of a beauty fadeless and eterne;
And always 'tis the saddest sight to see
An old man faithless in Humanity.

XVII.

THE SAME CONTINUED.

A POET cannot strive for despotism;
His harp falls shattered; for it still must be
The instinct of great spirits to be free,
And the sworn foes of cunning barbarism:
He who has deepest searched the wide abysm
Of that life-giving Soul which men call fate,
Knows that to put more faith in lies and hate
Than truth and love is the true atheism:
Upward the soul forever turns her eyes:
The next hour always shames the hour before·
One beauty, at its highest, prophesies
That by whose side it shall seem mean and poor
No Godlike thing knows aught of less and less,
But widens to the boundless Perfectness.

XVIII.

THE SAME CONTINUED.

THEREFORE think not the Past is wise alone,
For Yesterday knows nothing of the Best,
And thou shalt love it only as the nest
Whence glory-wingëd things to Heaven have flown:
To the great Soul only are all things known;
Present and future are to her as past,
While she in glorious madness doth forecast
That perfect bud, which seems a flower full-blown
To each new Prophet, and yet always opes
Fuller and fuller with each day and hour,
Heartening the soul with odor of fresh hopes,
And longings high, and gushings of wide power,
Yet never is or shall be fully blown
Save in the forethought of the Eternal One.

XIX.

THE SAME CONCLUDED.

FAR 'yond this narrow parapet of Time,
With eyes uplift, the poet's soul should look
Into the Endless Promise, nor should brook
One prying doubt to shake his faith sublime;
To him the earth is ever in her prime
And dewiness of morning; he can see
Good lying hid, from all eternity,
Within the teeming womb of sin and crime;
His soul should not be cramped by any bar,

His nobleness should be so Godlike high,
That his least deed is perfect as a star,
His common look majestic as the sky,
And all o'erflooded with a light from far,
Undimmed by clouds of weak mortality.

XX.

TO M. O. S.

Mary, since first I knew thee, to this hour,
My love hath deepened, with my wiser sense
Of what in Woman is to reverence;
Thy clear heart, fresh as e'er was forest-flower,
Still opens more to me its beauteous dower; —
But let praise hush, — Love asks no evidence
To prove itself well-placed; we know not whence
It gleans the straws that thatch its humble bower:
We can but say we found it in the heart,
Spring of all sweetest thoughts, arch foe of blame,
Sower of flowers in the dusty mart,
Pure vestal of the poet's holy flame, —
This is enough, and we have done our part
If we but keep it spotless as it came.

1842.

XXI.

Our love is not a fading, earthly flower:
Its wingëd seed dropped down from Paradise,
And, nursed by day and night, by sun and shower,
Doth momently to fresher beauty rise:

To us the leafless autumn is not bare,
Nor winter's rattling boughs lack lusty green.
Our summer hearts make summer's fulness, where
No leaf, or bud, or blossom may be seen:
For nature's life in love's deep life doth lie,
Love, — whose forgetfulness is beauty's death,
Whose mystic key these cells of Thou and I
Into the infinite freedom openeth,
And makes the body's dark and narrow grate
The wide-flung leaves of Heaven's own palace-gate.

1842.

XXII.

IN ABSENCE.

These rugged, wintry days I scarce could bear,
Did I not know, that, in the early spring,
When wild March winds upon their errands sing,
Thou wouldst return, bursting on this still air,
Like those same winds, when, startled from their lair,
They hunt up violets, and free swift brooks
From icy cares, even as thy clear looks
Bid my heart bloom, and sing, and break all care:
When drops with welcome rain the April day,
My flowers shall find their April in thine eyes,
Save there the rain in dreamy clouds doth stay,
As loath to fall out of those happy skies;
Yet sure, my love, thou art most like to May,
That comes with steady sun when April dies.

1843.

XXIII.

WENDELL PHILLIPS.

He stood upon the world's broad threshold; wide
The din of battle and of slaughter rose;
He saw God stand upon the weaker side,
That sank in seeming loss before its foes:
Many there were who made great haste and sold
Unto the cunning enemy their swords,
He scorned their gifts of fame, and power, and gold,
And, underneath their soft and flowery words,
Heard the cold serpent hiss; therefore he went
And humbly joined him to the weaker part,
Fanatic named, and fool, yet well content
So he could be the nearer to God's heart,
And feel its solemn pulses sending blood
Through all the wide-spread veins of endless good.

XXIV.

THE STREET.

They pass me by like shadows, crowds on crowds,
Dim ghosts of men, that hover to and fro,
Hugging their bodies round them like thin shrouds
Wherein their souls were buried long ago:
They trampled on their youth, and faith, and love,
They cast their hope of human-kind away,
With Heaven's clear messages they madly strove,
And conquered, — and their spirits turned to clay:
Lo! how they wander round the world, their grave,

Whose ever-gaping maw by such is fed,
Gibbering at living men, and idly rave,
"We, only, truly live, but ye are dead."
Alas! poor fools, the anointed eye may trace
A dead soul's epitaph in every face!

XXV.

I GRIEVE not that ripe Knowledge takes away
The charm that Nature to my childhood wore,
For, with that insight, cometh, day by day,
A greater bliss than wonder was before;
The real doth not clip the poet's wings, —
To win the secret of a weed's plain heart
Reveals some clew to spiritual things,
And stumbling guess becomes firm-footed art:
Flowers are not flowers unto the poet's eyes,
Their beauty thrills him by an inward sense;
He knows that outward seemings are but lies,
Or, at the most, but earthly shadows, whence
The soul that looks within for truth may guess
The presence of some wondrous heavenliness.

XXVI.

TO J. R. GIDDINGS.

GIDDINGS, far rougher names than thine have grown
Smoother than honey on the lips of men;
And thou shalt aye be honorably known,
As one who bravely used his tongue and pen,
As best befits a freeman, — even for those

To whom our Law's unblushing front denies
A right to plead against the lifelong woes
Which are the Negro's glimpse of Freedom's skies
Fear nothing, and hope all things, as the Right
Alone may do securely; every hour
The thrones of Ignorance and ancient Night
Lose somewhat of their long usurpëd power,
And Freedom's lightest word can make them shiver
With a base dread that clings to them forever.

XXVII.

I THOUGHT our love at full, but I did err;
Joy's wreath drooped o'er mine eyes; I could not see
That sorrow in our happy world must be
Love's deepest spokesman and interpreter:
But, as a mother feels her child first stir
Under her heart, so felt I instantly
Deep in my soul another bond to thee
Thrill with that life we saw depart from her;
O mother of our angel child! twice dear!
Death knits as well as parts, and still, I wis,
Her tender radiance shall infold us here,
Even as the light, borne up by inward bliss,
Threads the void glooms of space without a fear,
To print on farthest stars her pitying kiss.

L'ENVOI.

WHETHER my heart hath wiser grown or not,
In these three years, since I to thee inscribed,

Mine own betrothed, the firstlings of my muse, —
Poor windfalls of unripe experience,
Young buds plucked hastily by childish hands
Not patient to await more full-blown flowers, —
At least it hath seen more of life and men,
And pondered more, and grown a shade more sad;
Yet with no loss of hope or settled trust
In the benignness of that Providence
Which shapes from out our elements awry
The grace and order that we wonder at,
The mystic harmony of right and wrong,
Both working out His wisdom and our good:
A trust, Beloved, chiefly learned of thee,
Who hast that gift of patient tenderness,
The instinctive wisdom of a woman's heart.
They tell us that our land was made for song,
With its huge rivers and sky-piercing peaks,
Its sealike lakes and mighty cataracts,
Its forests vast and hoar, and prairies wide,
And mounds that tell of wondrous tribes extinct.
But Poesy springs not from rocks and woods;
Her womb and cradle are the human heart,
And she can find a nobler theme for song
In the most loathsome man that blasts the sight
Than in the broad expanse of sea and shore
Between the frozen deserts of the poles.
All nations have their message from on high,
Each the messiah of some central thought,
For the fulfilment and delight of Man:

One has to teach that labor is divine;
Another Freedom; and another Mind;
And all, that God is open-eyed and just,
The happy centre and calm heart of all.

Are, then, our woods, our mountains, and our streams,
Needful to teach our poets how to sing?
O maiden rare, far other thoughts were ours,
When we have sat by ocean's foaming marge,
And watched the waves leap roaring on the rocks,
Than young Leander and his Hero had,
Gazing from Sestos to the other shore.
The moon looks down and ocean worships her,
Stars rise and set, and seasons come and go
Even as they did in Homer's elder time,
But we behold them not with Grecian eyes:
Then they were types of beauty and of strength,
But now of freedom, unconfined and pure,
Subject alone to Order's higher law.
What cares the Russian serf or Southern slave
Though we should speak as man spake never yet
Of gleaming Hudson's broad magnificence,
Or green Niagara's never-ending roar?
Our country hath a gospel of her own
To preach and practise before all the world, —
The freedom and divinity of man,
The glorious claims of human brotherhood, —
Which to pay nobly, as a freeman should,
Gains the sole wealth that will not fly away, —

And the soul's fealty to none but God.
These are realities, which make the shows
Of outward Nature, be they ne'er so grand,
Seem small, and worthless, and contemptible.
These are the mountain-summits for our bards,
Which stretch far upward into heaven itself,
And give such wide-spread and exulting view
Of hope, and faith, and onward destiny,
That shrunk Parnassus to a molehill dwindles.
Our new Atlantis, like a morning-star,
Silvers the mirk face of slow-yielding Night,
The herald of a fuller truth than yet
Hath gleamed upon the upraised face of Man
Since the earth glittered in her stainless prime, —
Of a more glorious sunrise than of old
Drew wondrous melodies from Memnon huge,
Yea, draws them still, though now he sit waist-deep
In the ingulfing flood of whirling sand,
And look across the wastes of endless gray,
Sole wreck, where once his hundred-gated Thebes
Pained with her mighty hum the calm, blue heaven;
Shall the dull stone pay grateful orisons,
And we till noonday bar the splendor out,
Lest it reproach and chide our sluggard hearts,
Warm-nestled in the down of Prejudice,
And be content, though clad with angel-wings,
Close-clipped, to hop about from perch to perch,
In paltry cages of dead men's dead thoughts?
O, rather, like the skylark, soar and sing,

And let our gushing songs befit the dawn
And sunrise, and the yet unshaken dew
Brimming the chalice of each full-blown hope,
Whose blithe front turns to greet the growing day!
Never had poets such high call before,
Never can poets hope for higher one,
And, if they be but faithful to their trust,
Earth will remember them with love and joy
And O, far better, God will not forget.
For he who settles Freedom's principles,
Writes the death-warrant of all tyranny;
Who speaks the truth stabs Falsehood to the heart,
And his mere word makes despots tremble more
Than ever Brutus with his dagger could.
Wait for no hints from waterfalls or woods,
Nor dream that tales of red men, brute and fierce,
Repay the finding of this Western World,
Or needed half the globe to give them birth:
Spirit supreme of Freedom! not for this
Did great Columbus tame his eagle soul
To jostle with the daws that perch in courts;
Not for this, friendless, on an unknown sea,
Coping with mad waves and more mutinous spirits,
Battled he with the dreadful ache at heart
Which tempts, with devilish subtleties of doubt,
The hermit of that loneliest solitude,
The silent desert of a great New Thought;
Though loud Niagara were to-day struck dumb,
Yet would this cataract of boiling life

Rush plunging on and on to endless deeps,
And utter thunder till the world shall cease, —
A thunder worthy of the poet's song,
And which alone can fill it with true life.
The high evangel to our country granted
Could make apostles, yea, with tongues of fire,
Of hearts half-darkened back again to clay!
'Tis the soul only that is national,
And he who pays true loyalty to that
Alone can claim the wreath of patriotism.

Beloved! if I wander far and oft
From that which I believe, and feel, and know,
Thou wilt forgive, not with a sorrowing heart,
But with a strengthened hope of better things;
Knowing that I, though often blind and false
To those I love, and O, more false than all
Unto myself, have been most true to thee,
And that whoso in one thing hath been true
Can be as true in all. Therefore thy hope
May yet not prove unfruitful, and thy love
Meet, day by day, with less unworthy thanks,
Whether, as now, we journey hand in hand,
Or, parted in the body, yet are one
In spirit and the love of holy things.

NOTES AND QUESTIONS.

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL.

PRELUDE TO PART I.

STANZA I. In what frame is the organist's mind as he begins the melody?

Compare the fourth line with the first line of stanza i. of Browning's "Abt Vogler."

What serves to render the musician's theme more distinct and clear?

Explain the metaphor in the seventh and eighth lines.

Questions to be noted after studying the Poem.

What connection has the first stanza with the rest of the poem?

Would the conclusion that Lowell had no conception of his theme and its development when he began to write be necessarily correct? Give reasons.

Might this stanza be termed a metaphor, in which the organist stands for the poet, the instrument for the mechanical part of the poetry, and the theme of the music for the theme of the poem?

Is this revery as an introduction better suited to the subject and its handling than an abrupt one would be? Why?

Why is this "musical" figure particularly apt?

STANZA II. Compare the first two lines with the ninth line of stanza v. of Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality": —

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

Could any other word be substituted for "splendors" in the second line and give the thought as well?

Explain the figure in the fourth line: "We Sinais climb."

It was upon Mount Sinai that God talked with Moses and gave the Ten Commandments and the Law. The Israelites were in the third month of their journey out of Egypt. Mount Sinai is in the northwestern part of Arabia. (Exodus xix. and xx.)

What clause in the third line explains why "we know it not"?

Upon what condition does the acquirement of truth by the mind rest? (Cf. St. John vii. 17.)

STANZA III. What figures are to be found in this stanza?

From what have our lives "fallen"? To what are our lives "traitor"?

Druidism was the religion of the ancient Celts. The priests, the Druids, dwelt in the woods, and there offered their sacrifices, interpreted to the people the divine will, and exercised over them the authority of judges, prophets, and teachers.

Compare the second, third, seventh, and eighth lines for similarity of thought with the seventh and eighth lines of stanza iii. of the "Intimations of Immortality": —

> "The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep,
> No more shall grief of mine the season wrong."

Why does Lowell represent the "druid wood" as uttering the benedicite, rather than the winds, or the sea?

With what are the weakness and selfishness of man contrasted?

STANZA IV. What two thoughts are opposed to each other in this stanza?

What is the nature of the things which earth "sells" us?

In what coin do we pay?

What line suggests the satisfaction we receive from these bargains?

Explain the figures in the seventh and eighth lines.

What is the nature of the things which God gives us?

STANZA V. What makes the beauty of this stanza?

Explain the figure in the third and fourth lines, and point out its significance.

To the poet's mind, what natural relation exists between earth and heaven? What line suggests the answer?

Why is the buttercup, rather than the clover, or violet, spoken of as "catching the sun in its chalice"?

What figure, in the description of the bird, adds to the effect of the summer grace and lightsomeness of the picture?

Is the use of the word "deluge," in the twentieth line, a happy one artistically? Give reasons for your answer.

Why have we the expression "*dumb* breast" in the twenty-second line?

What instinct urges her to sing?

In what sense is the word "nice" used in the twenty-fourth line?

STANZA VI. What figure is used in the first four lines? How is the sense of largeness imparted by the source of the figure?

Does the figurative mode of expression used from the thirteenth to the eighteenth lines add to, or detract from, the beauty of the thought? Why?

Where before has the breeze been spoken of as bearing messages?

Explain the figure in the twenty-second line.

Note that in stanzas v. and vi., Lowell, even as Wordsworth, conceives of Nature as having a thoughtful, conscious life: —

> "Every clod feels a stir of might,
> And, groping blindly above it for light,
> Climbs to a *soul* in grass and flowers."

> "The little bird sits at his door in the sun,
> Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
> And lets his illumined being o'errun
> With the deluge of summer it receives;
> His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
> And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;
> He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest."

> "The breeze comes whispering in our ear,
> That the robin is plastering his house hard by."

STANZA VII. In Lowell's mind, what feeling exists between Man and Nature? What influence has the latter upon him? Let the student find instances in the poem thus far, illustrating this thought.

Explain the figure in the eighth line.

Why is the work wrought by sin and sorrow aptly likened to the rifts of the volcanic crater?

What lines express the purpose of the Prelude, and somewhat suggest the story which is to follow?

PART I.

STANZA I. **The Holy Grail.** The cup of emerald from which Christ drank at the last supper. Joseph of Arimathea caught in it some of the blood of Christ at the crucifixion. According to the earliest legend, "Le Petit Saint-Graal," the cup was taken to the West by the brother-in-law of Joseph of Arimathea; a later one, "Le Grand-Saint-Graal," relates that Joseph himself took it to England. The Celtic stories connected with King Arthur became blended with those of the Grail. A search for the Grail was instituted among the Knights of the Round Table. Only he whose life was pure and stainless might hope to see the blessed cup. To Galahad was the vision granted.

Compare the preparations made for the search by Sir Launfal with those made by Percivale's sister, and Sir Galahad, in Tennyson's "Holy Grail:" stanza viii., lines nine and ten; stanza ix., lines thirteen and fourteen; and stanza xv., line thirteen.

Why is the figure in the twelfth line most fitting?

When before has the divine Voice come to men in cloud and dream? (Judges vii. 13; Daniel ii. and iv.; Joel ii. 28; St. Matthew ii. 12, 13. St. Matthew xvii. 5.)

STANZA II. What line decides one that here is described a midsummer *morning?*

Why does not the castle add to the picture of summer fulness and joy?

What figure is there within the simile of the sixth and seventh lines expressed by the words, "outpost of winter"?

(The castle, symbolic of feudal times, when sharp lines marked the divisions of society, and chilled the feeling of the brotherhood of man, even as in winter Nature is cold and unresponsive, — stands as an outpost of whatever remains that would separate man from his neighbor; observing with jealous glance the enemy which it sees in the tendency to break down caste, figured in the lavish generosity, and blending of the summer life.)

Why has the poet used the ancient mode of spelling in "countree"?

What are the "pavilions" of summer referred to in the fourteenth line?

What common occurrence has the poet noticed in the last line?

STANZA III. By what poetical artifice is the music of the first two lines produced? Notice the frequent use of the same throughout the entire poem.

What figure used in the second stanza is continued in the third?

Why does the use of this figure add to the effectiveness of the description?

What serves to render the tenth and eleventh lines melodious?

In what spirit does Sir Launfal start out in his search for the Holy Grail?

What is his motive in the search? (See the closing lines of the Prelude to Part I.) Do you find any hint so far that there is aught of holy desire and longing to see the Grail?

STANZA IV. What contrast is there in this stanza?

How does the castle "rebuff" the gifts of the sunshine?

Why could it not live its life of isolation without affecting its surroundings either one way or the other?

Explain the figure in the sixth and seventh lines.

STANZA V. What is the meaning and significance of the expression, "made morn through the darksome gate"?

What effect does the leper produce upon Sir Launfal?

What clause emphasizes the abased attitude of the leper's mind?

What is the force of the simile in its application in the seventh and eighth lines?

What is Sir Launfal's motive in giving the gold to the beggar?

STANZA VI. Why does the leper refuse the gift?

With what does he contrast the gold?

How does he characterize that which is given from a sense of duty?

Meaning of "gives to that which is out of sight"?

Compare the fifth line with Luke xi. 41 (Revised Version).

What is the source of all beauty?

What is the "thread which runs through all and doth all unite"?

What is the largeness of such a gift, though it be "but a slender mite"?

Why does he say that "a god goes with it"?

PRELUDE TO PART II.

STANZA I. What change in Nature is now introduced?

wold = an unwooded country (whether a plain or hill).

What is the first touch by which the picture is relieved of its intense coldness and loneliness?

groin = the projecting, solid angle formed by the meeting of two vaults, growing more obtuse as it approaches the summit.

What makes the beauty of the simile in the twefth and thirteenth lines?

Does the introduction of the word "*steel*-stemmed" into this picture of Nature strengthen, or weaken, the desired effect? Why?

arabesque = a style of ornamentation consisting of a pattern in which plants, fruits, and figures of men and animals are fantastically interlaced.

What attribute of heaven is mentioned?

Note the attractive way in which personification is used; or, rather, the active, joyous life with which the poet invests Nature even in winter.

What would you say of Lowell's attitude toward Nature? Give instances in the poem to substantiate your answer.

Notice the frequent use of alliteration in this Prelude.

What lines indicate the models from which the brook-builder fashioned his house?

In this use of personification of the frost-builder, is the poet quite consistent? Note and compare the eighth line with the thirty-seventh?

What is there in the latter half of the stanza to soften the winter severity?

STANZA II. By what figure is the merriment of Christmas heightened?

corbel = a bracket used in architecture to support the spring of an arch; much used in the Gothic style of architecture. A common form consists of a series of stones or bricks, each projecting slightly beyond the one below it.

Yule-log = a large log of wood, formerly put on the hearth on Christmas Eve as the foundation of the fire. It was brought in with much ceremony.

pennon = a flag or streamer.

to belly = to swell out.

Name the different figures used in this stanza.

Note the device by which the musical effect of the last four lines is gained.

What effect upon the outer cold does this glimpse of Christmas warmth and cheer make?

Why does the poet, even in this stanza, but briefly allude to the "song and laughter," and then turn to the pictures and reveries suggested by the Yule-log's tongues of fire and scattering sparks?

STANZA III. What sounds are introduced into this stanza? With what are they contrasted in the preceding stanza?

Notice the metaphor in the second line. What is there in the season of the year to render the wind's Christmas carol especially sad?

seneschal = an officer in the houses of princes and dignitaries, in the Middle Ages, who had the superintendence of feasts and domestic ceremonies.

What effect does the voice of the seneschal have upon Sir Launfal? What figure conveys this idea?

How is his loneliness affected by the nearness of the hall in which are "song and laughter"?

PART II.

STANZA I. Compare the metaphor, "the river's shroud," with the metaphor in the first stanza, lines eight and nine, of the Prelude to this Part. What is the difference in the effect of the two?

What kind of a sky would one imagine for such a morning?

What is the poet's reason for giving us here a morning so different from the one in Part I.?

What is the most forcible impression made by the stanza? What lines convey it?

STANZA II. What figure is there in the first line?

surcoat = a long, flowing garment of knights, worn over the armor, and often emblazoned with the arms of the wearer.

Why was not Sir Launfal disturbed by the loss of his earldom?

Was he not in greater need of home and comfort than when he started out in his search for the Grail?

What lines indicate that there had grown into his heart a genuine sympathy for suffering and sorrow?

STANZA III. What word may be substituted for "idle" in the second line?

Explain the figure in this line.

To what do the words "black and small" refer in the eighth line?

Why does Sir Launfal gain more comfort in the "light and warmth of long ago," than in the sight of the ruddy glow sent out from the "great hall fire"?

What renders the picture of the "little spring" so attractive?

STANZA IV. What interrupts his revery of the past?

What line marks a difference in Sir Launfal's attitude toward the leper as contrasted with that of the first time he saw him in the vision?

What constitutes the peculiar horror of the disease of leprosy?

Explain the significance of the simile in lines five and six.

STANZA V. Whom does Sir Launfal see in the leper?

Had it taken him a long, or a short time, even in the vision, to come to that state where he could behold the Christ in every fellow-being?

Whom is he addressing in the last two lines?

Cf. the last line with St. Matthew xxv. 40.

STANZA VI. Cf. with the first line the first line of stanza vi., Part I. How is the difference in the attitude of the leper to be explained?

"straightway he." To whom does the pronoun refer?

Do you agree with the poet in thinking that the heart of Sir Launfal was "ashes and dust"? In what sense does Lowell mean it?

What was Sir Launfal's gift to the leper when he first met him?

What is it now?

Why does the leper spurn the gold in Part I., but here accept the "mouldy crust" and the icy water as "fine wheaten bread" and "red wine"?

Does Sir Launfal give the whole of his crust to the leper?

Would it have been better had he done so?

Notice later the spiritual lesson Lowell would teach.

What figure is used in the last two lines?

What change do we find in "the soul that was starving in darkness before"? See Part I., stanza vi.

Note the use of alliteration in this stanza.

STANZA VII. Into whom is the leper transformed?

Is this metaphor in which Christ is likened to a gate original with the poet? (St. John x. 7.)

Cf. with the miracle which took place at the Beautiful gate of the Temple, recorded in Acts iii. 1–8.

STANZA VIII. Why are the leaves of the pine used, rather than those of some other tree?

What is the force of the simile in the second and third lines?

What need might there be for the first words of the Voice?

Although in the many years, Sir Launfal had failed to find the Holy Grail, why do you think the search had not been wholly "without avail"?

What significance lies in the fact that it was at his own door, rather than in some distant clime, that he found the Grail at last?

Compare the first use of the Holy Grail with the service rendered by Sir Launfal by which his search is rewarded.

What is the kernel of the thought in the last six lines?

Does modern charity fulfil the requirement of these lines? Give reasons for your answer.

Compare these obligations which are laid by Lowell upon the soul with those which Christ lays upon us. (St. John xv. 12, 13.)

How is it that when the gift is prompted by the true spirit, not only Christ, and the "hungering neighbor," are fed, but the act serves as food to the giver also?

Why is it impossible for the human soul to be satisfied in a selfish life?

STANZA IX. What beside the dream did Sir Launfal feel that the sleep had brought him?

Does Lowell evidently think that God speaks to us through our "higher instincts" and intuitions as well as through the Scriptures?

What is the "stronger mail" referred to in the fifth line?

What idea is expressed by the use of the auxiliary verb in this line?

STANZA X. By what figure is the hospitality with which all are welcomed to the castle emphasized?

What change is introduced in this stanza into the picture of the castle as given us in the second stanza of Part I.?

Is the figure from the fifth to the tenth lines a new one?

Was it necessary that Summer should enter the castle in disguise?

What shows that Sir Launfal had truly learned the lesson of the vision?

How did he show it in his life?

SUMMARY.

Are the words mostly of Latin, or Anglo-Saxon origin?

What is the most common device by which the melodious effect of the poem is produced?

From what source is the majority of the figures drawn?

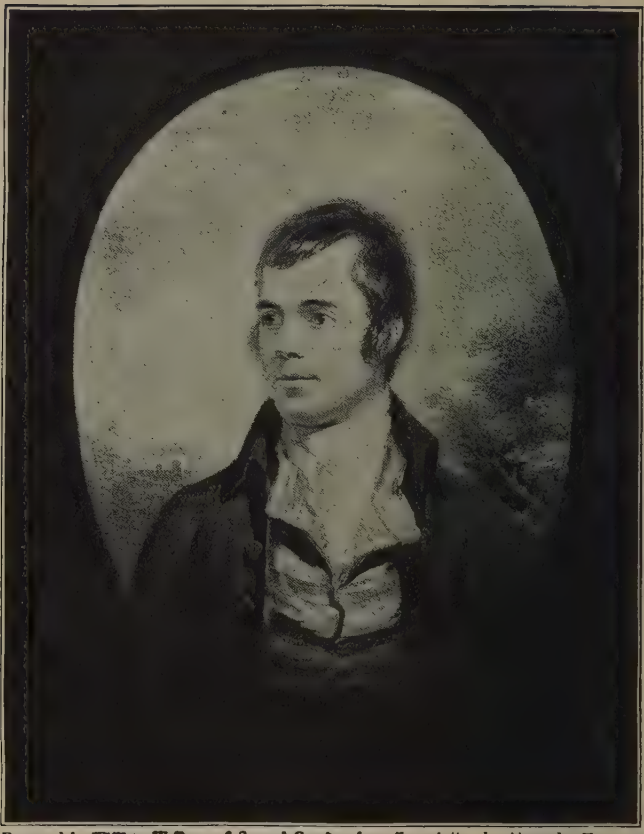
Is the poet consistent throughout in the structure of the verse?

Is the setting of each Part in harmony with the thought?

Comparing the poem with Tennyson's "Holy Grail," which would you consider the greater? Give reasons.

What is the central thought of each?

From this poem, would one conclude that Lowell agrees with that philosopher who defined love as "unity of life"?



Engraved by William Walker and Samuel Cousins, from the painting by Alexander Nasmyth done in 1787

Robert Burns

The Students' Series of English Classics

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

BY

ROBERT BURNS

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,

BY

GEORGE A. WATROUS, A.M.

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ROBERT BURNS.

(1759–1796.)

The years of Robert Burns were few in number. Not many, however, who have lived man's allotted threescore and ten have experienced more fully than he did the possibilities of human joy and sorrow. Into thirty-six years of intense living were crowded the passionate experiences that gave to our literature many of its sweetest songs. His was a life begun in poverty, and its stern lines were never softened. The wretchedness of self-reproach and gloomy apprehension for the future of those dear to him embittered his last hours. A strange life and a sad one! wherein were mingled the purest of human emotions and the basest of human passions. He was weak, irresolute, infirm of purpose; yet we revere the memory of the man. We love him for his love of us. Few have known man's heart as he did; none have so tenderly voiced its longing.

Into his songs Burns put his life. Pathetic plaints of the ills of fortune; weary moaning for sins beyond atonement; joyous lilts of love; "the riotous shout of mirth;" praise of the good; the song of wild patriotic fire; filial devotion and fraternal love, — all that binds man to his fellow, to his country, to his God, is sung by this poet of life.

Robert, eldest son of William and Agnes Burness (so the name was then spelled), was born at Ayr in Ayrshire, a hamlet some twenty miles from Glasgow, 25th January, 1759. Mr. Burness was unsuccessful in business, but gave his six children a

name untarnished. He was honest, true, pious, a man of culture and refinement. His wife was a tenderly sympathetic woman whose education had been heart culture. Poverty was their lot throughout life, — a fierce struggle with adverse fate.

Our poet's educational privileges were, therefore, meagre, but he made the most of his very limited opportunities. He became an excellent English scholar, acquired a little French and less Latin. Nature was his school and mistress. An apt student he was under this instruction; it found ready response. Here was developed his measureless sympathy, with an intense love for all that lives, — the "crimson-tipp'd flow'r," the "tim'rous Beastie," the "bonnie lark," "poor Mailie."

Among the peasant class he lived and grew — grew into and knew and felt its hopes and fears, its loves and hates. He was of the people, and became their poet. Their thoughts and feelings were his, and, refined in the alembic of his imagination, came to us in spontaneous bursts of song. His poems tell the passion of the moment. He seldom revised what he had written — there is much of soul, little of head. The power of his songs is in their simplicity, the power of the class whose life is pictured.

Burns was always poor, and always worked hard. Misfortune, pitiless, dogged his efforts. His farming ventures at Mossgiel and Ellisland were failures. Bad seed and bad seasons are beyond man's control, and no blame should rest on him for his lack of success as a farmer. He was certainly, in the places mentioned, industrious and persevering. He bought books on farming, calculated the prices of crops, and attended the markets. Human foresight does not avail against unfavorable weather, and so his efforts came to naught. The star of his fortune seemed ever set beneath its nadir.

From his business troubles he took refuge in his songs and love-making. It was perhaps one of Burns's misfortunes that he was a "bonnie lad," one whom all women admired. Between two and three hundred songs tell of the light and shades in his love episodes. Episodes they were; none to his credit, and many one must deeply regret. "My heart was completely tinder," he writes of himself, "and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other."

At fifteen love and poetry began with him. His first flame was Nelly Kilpatrick, a blacksmith's daughter and a "bewitching creature." In her honor he wrote his first song and first effort in rhyme, "O, once I loved a bonnie lass." From then until his last days, when he wrote one of his most touching lyrics, the song beginning "Here's to ane I lo'e best," he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver. His acquaintance with Jean Armour began after his father's death in 1784, when the Burns family removed to Mossgiel. This acquaintance colored all his after life, and imparted to it its brightest light and darkest shadows. Trusting Jean was the victim of his passion. Her father, in a rage, destroyed the paper that Burns had given her in acknowledgment of marriage, and threatened her betrayer with the law. In this plight Burns resolved to leave Scotland, and emigrate to America. To raise the money necessary to pay his passage, he published the first (Kilmarnock) edition of his poems. It brought him the needed sum, and he made ready for Jamaica.

But the sailing of the ship was delayed, and in the interval his fame had travelled to Edinburgh. Thither he was invited to go and issue another edition. The prospect was pleasant, he was ambitious, and Jamaica lost a slave-driver.

At Edinburgh a new life opened upon the "Ploughman Poet." He became the lion of the hour. He was feasted by

men, flattered by women, courted and admired by all. The great men of the city, Dugald Stewart, Dr. Blacklock, Henry Mackenzie, were his friends. Creech, the leading publisher of the time, undertook to bring out his poems. The list of subscribers covered thirty pages, and contained the names of all the notables of the day.

In the midst of such triumph the poet of the people maintained his simple dignity. Lords and ladies did not turn his head. To him a coat-of-arms, wealth, social position, made the possessor no more a man. This sentiment permeates all his work.

> "The rank is but the guinea-stamp,
> The man's the gowd for a' that."

Nor did the high favor of the hour decoy him to false hopes of future security. The Edinburgh edition of his poems netted him £500. Of this sum he sent £180 to his brother to assist in maintaining his mother and sister on the farm at Mossgiel. Later he leased a farm at Ellisland, and obtained an appointment as exciseman. He was married to Jean Armour, and they lived happily together. Burns was not always a faithful husband; but Jean was a forgiving wife, more forgiving than wise. These years were probably the happiest of his life. Poet, exciseman, and farmer — the days were busy ones.

The duties of his public office were severe and exacting, compelling long journeys on horseback in weather good or bad. His strength had been enfeebled by dissipation, and could not endure the strain put upon it in the performance of his excise duties. As a result of exposure, he fell sick. Misfortunes crowded thick and fast. His salary — a pittance of £70 — was reduced one-half; his wife was ill; importunate creditors assailed him on all sides, and he was so reduced that

he was compelled to solicit from a friend the loan of a one-pound note. Unhappy Burns! No wonder his spirit failed him; that he gave way to despair. There was no light athwart the shadow; not a ray of hope penetrated his despondent gloom. To the last he was the sport of evil fate. Thus tormented, on the 23d of July, 1796, he passed away — Scotland's greatest bard, the world's sweetest singer.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

INSCRIBED TO R. A . . . ., ESQ.

> Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
> Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
> Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
> The short but simple annals of the Poor.
>
> GRAY.

1.

MY lov'd, my honour'd, much respected friend,
No mercenary Bard his homage pays;
With honest pride I scorn each selfish end,
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The *lowly train* in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways,
What A . . . . in a *Cottage* would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there I ween!

2.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:
The toil-worn COTTER frae his labour goes,

This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his *spades*, his *mattocks*, and his *hoes*,
Hoping the *morn* in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

3.

At length his lonely *Cot* appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
The expectant *wee-things*, toddlan, stacher through
To meet their *Dad*, wi' flichterin noise and glee.
His wee-bit ingle, blinkan bonnily,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty *Wifie's* smile,
The *lisping infant* prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary *kiaugh and care* beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

4.

Belyve, the *elder bairns* come drapping in,
At *Service* out, amang the Farmers roun';
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neebor town:
Their eldest hope, their *Jenny*, woman-grown,
In youthfu' bloom, Love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
Or deposit her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her *Parents* dear, if they in hardship be.

5.

With joy unfeign'd *brothers* and *sisters* meet,
And each for other's weelfare kindly spiers:

The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears.
The Parents partial eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view.
The *Mother*, wi' her needle and her shears,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new
The *Father* mixes a' wi' admonition due.

6.

Their Master's an' their Mistress's command,
The *youngkers* a' are warned to obey;
And mind their labors wi' an eydent hand,
And ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
"And O! be sure to fear the LORD alway!
"And mind your duty, duely, morn and night!
"Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
"Implore his *counsel* and assisting *might:*
"They never sought in vain that sought the LORD aright."

7.

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neebor lad came o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily Mother sees the *conscious flame*
Sparkle in *Jenny's* e'e, and flush her cheek,
With heart-struck, anxious care enquires his name,
While *Jenny* hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel-pleas'd the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless *Rake.*

8.

With kindly welcome, *Jenny* brings him ben;
A *strappan youth;* he takes the Mother's eye;
Blythe *Jenny* sees the *visit's* no ill ta'en;
The Father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The Youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate and laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
The Mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the *youth* sae bashfu' and sae grave;
Weel-pleased to think her *bairn's* respected like the lave.

9.

O happy love. Where love like this is found!
O heartfelt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've paced much this weary, *mortal round,*
And sage EXPERIENCE bids me this declare —
"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
"One *cordial* in this melancholy *Vale,*
"'Tis when a youthful, loving, *modest* Pair
"In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale,
"Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale."

10.

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart —
A Wretch! a Villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!
Are *Honor, Virtue, Conscience,* all exil'd?

Is there no Pity, no relenting Ruth,
Points to the Parents fondling o'er their Child?
Then paints the *ruin'd Maid*, and *their* distraction wild!

11.

But now the Supper crowns their simple board,
The healsome *Porritch*, chief of SCOTIA'S food:
The soupe their *only Hawkie* does afford,
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood:
The *Dame* brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell,
And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal *Wifie*, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' Lint was i' the bell.

12.

The cheerfu' Supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The Sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big *ha'-Bible*, ance his *Father's* pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His *lyart haffets* wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in ZION glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And '*Let us worship* GOD!' he says with solemn air.

13.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise!
They tune their *hearts*, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild warbling measures rise,

Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name;
Or noble *Elgin* beets the heaven-ward flame,
The sweetest far of SCOTIA'S holy lays:
Compar'd with these, *Italian trills* are tame;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they, with our CREATOR'S praise.

14.

The priest-like Father reads the sacred page,
How ABRAM was the Friend of GOD on high;
Or, *Moses* bade eternal warfare wage,
With *Amalek's* ungracious progeny;
Or how the *royal Bard* did groaning lye,
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or *Job's* pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt *Isaiah's* wild, seraphic fire;
Or other *Holy Seers* that tune the *sacred lyre*.

15.

Perhaps the *Christian Volume* is the theme,
How *guiltless blood* for *guilty man* was shed:
How HE, who bore in Heaven the second name,
Had not on Earth whereon to lay His head:
How His first *followers* and *servants* sped;
The *Precepts sage* they wrote to many a land:
How *he*, who lone in *Patmos* banished,
Saw in the Sun a mighty angel stand;
And heard great *Bab'lon's* doom pronounced by Heaven's command.

16.

Then kneeling down, to HEAVEN'S ETERNAL KING,
The Saint, the Father, and the Husband prays:
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"
That *thus* they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in *uncreated rays*,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their CREATOR'S praise,
In *such society*, yet still more dear;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

17.

Compar'd with *this*, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of *method* and of *art*,
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the *heart!*
The POWER, incens'd, the Pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some *Cottage* far apart,
May hear, well pleased, the language of the *Soul;*
And in *His Book of Life* the Inmates poor enroll.

18.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling *Cottagers* retire to rest:
The Parent-pair their *secret homage* pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That HE who stills the *raven's* clam'rous nest,

And decks the *lily* fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way *His Wisdom* sees the best,
For *them* and for their *little-ones* provide;
But chiefly, in their hearts with *Grace divine* preside.

19.

From scenes like these, old SCOTIA'S grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
"An honest man's the noblest work of GOD:"
And *certes*, in fair Virtue's heavenly road,
The *Cottage* leaves the *Palace* far behind:
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the *wretch* of human kind,
Studied in arts of Hell, in wickedness refin'd!

20.

O SCOTIA! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy sons of *rustic toil*
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And O may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From *Luxury's* contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er *crowns* and *coronets* be rent,
A *virtuous Populace* may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd ISLE.

21.

O THOU! who pour'd the *patriotic tide*
That stream'd thro' great, unhappy *Wallace'* heart;

Who dar'd to, nobly, stem tyrannic pride,
Or *nobly die*, the second glorious part:
(The Patriot's GOD, peculiarly thou art,
His *friend, inspirer, guardian*, and *reward!*)
O never, never, SCOTIA'S realm desert,
But still the *Patriot*, and the *Patriot-Bard*,
In bright succession raise, her *Ornament* and *Guard*

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

The Cotter's Saturday Night was written in 1785, at Mossgiel. No nobler tribute to the sturdy virtues of the poor has ever been penned. It is not marred by ranting; in a pure, simple, homely way, it pictures the sweetness of life in honest poverty. Gilbert Burns says: "Robert had frequently remarked to me that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God,' used by a decent, sober head of a family introducing family worship. To this sentiment of the author, the world is indebted for *The Cotter's Saturday Night.*"

That the personality of Burns may be more fully appreciated, frequent references to other writers have been given when a marked similarity between the passages may be noticed. Attention is particularly called to lines from Thomson, Cowper, and Goldsmith; for Burns showed especially the influence of these men.

The hint of the plan and the title of the poem were taken from Ferguson's *Farmer's Ingle.* In its conception, in spirit, in vividness and force, the genius of Burns is unmistakable. It is, perhaps, the best known of his longer poems, and deservedly so. Mrs. Oliphant declares that "a sketch of family life more pure, more true, or more touching, was never made. . . . Scotland was the first object of the revelation — but after Scotland, mankind." It was this poem which introduced Burns to Mrs. Dunlop; and the words of her old servant show how perfect is this picture of Scotch peasant life: "Gentle-

men and ladies may think muckle o' this. But for me, it's naething but what I saw i' my faither's hoose every day, and I dinna see hoo hae could hae tell't it ony ither way."

Let not ambition, etc. From Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.*

STANZA I.

My lov'd, my honour'd, much respected friend! Robert Aiken, a solicitor in Ayr, a life-long and intimate friend of Burns.

No mercernary Bard. Cf. the stanza in Gray's *Elegy*, "The thoughtless world to majesty may bow."

In simple Scottish lays. Much of Burns's best poetry is written in the Ayrshire dialect. His genius drew this patois from obscurity, and gave it literary immortality.

Ween (colloquial and poetic), guess, suppose. From A. S. wēnan < wēn (hope) < root wīn.

STANZA II.

Blaws = blows. The poem contains some stanzas in the Scotch dialect and others in almost pure English. The dialectic forms differ but little from the English. The change of form is usually a variation of the stem vowel. Scotch is, indeed, the form taken by English in the North, and is related to English as Doric to Attic Greek. The Scotch forms are far more musical than our own. The main changes are here given. The vowel a for o; i.e., blaw, snaw, craw, hame, warld, Rab, Tam, etc.; sae for so, brither for brother, frae for from, rin for run, sair for sore, etc.; the consonant which appears in English, often elided in Scotch, i.e. an' for and, o' for of, roun' for round, wi' for with, youthfu' for youthful, ca' for call; the ending *ing* is usually shortened to *in;* many contracted phrases, as wadna, downado, isna, till't, I'se, dinna, and o't, for *would not, do not do, is not, to it, I shall, do not*, and *of it;* the familiar diminutive *ie* (mousie, beastie, wifie), — these and similar dialectic peculiarities will not be further noticed in these notes. Words which are distinctively Scottish or provincial will be defined as they occur.

Sugh (Scot.). The sound of the wind as it rushes through the tree-tops. Scotch *u* has the sound of French *u* or German *ü*, *gh* is guttural. These, with the initial *s*, make a word wonderfully imitative of the sound. Cf. our word *sough.*

Cotter. *Vid. Standard Dictionary.* **Moil** (Scot) = toil. Cf., with

this stanza, the first in Gray's *Elegy*. Note, in reading the poem, the dialectic and English stanzas. Why did Burns change from one to the other?

STANZA III.

Stacher = stagger, walk unsteadily.

Flichterin = fluttering. **Ingle** = fireplace. *Kiaugh and Care.* (Later changed to *Carking cares*) — **kiaugh,** meaning **cark.** *Vid. Dict.* Notice the nice use of the word quite, sadly misused in these days of hyperbole.

STANZA IV.

Belyve (Scot) = by and by. **Ca'** (call) = drive. **Tentie** = heedful, (at) tentive. **Cannie** = careful. How has the word come to mean "skilled in magic"? **E'e** = eye. **Braw** = handsome. **Deposit** = accent? In what peculiar stanza is the poem written? What are the advantages of this form? Were there good reasons for its selection in the present instance? Does the last line of this stanza suggest the poet who invented this form?

STANZA V.

Spiers = asks. **Uncos** = news. **Gars** = makes. **Claes** = clothes. This line is a famous one. Why? Are there many such in this poem? Pick out the "quotable" lines. "Although the Cotter in the Saturday Night is an exact copy of my father in his manners, his family devotions, and his exhortations, yet the other parts of the description do not apply to our family." — GILBERT BURNS.

STANZA VI.

Youngkers = youngsters. **Eydent** = diligent. **Jauk** = to trifle away one's time. **Duty** here means prayers. With this stanza cf. stanza II. of Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*. Do these lines show that Burns was a pious man? What is the suggestion made by the quotation-marks about the last four verses? Do they show anything concerning Burns's honesty?

STANZA VII.

Kens (arch. and Scot.). Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book V., l. 265. **Convoy** = accompany. In what sense is the word **wily** used? What is the "conscious flame"? **Hafflins** = partly. It is difficult to conceive a picture of motherly sympathy more beautiful than that here presented.

STANZA VIII.

Ben (Prov. and Scot.). Here means into the inner room. The Cotter's home had two rooms, **but** and **ben**: the **but** was the outer room. Cf. stanza xviii. of the *Holy Friar*, and the chorus of the song, *Blythe was She*. **Cracks** (O. E. and Scot.) = gossips. **Blate** = modest. **Laithfu'** = bashful. Observe the happy relation of the action (spy) to the means (wi' a woman's wiles). **Lave** = the rest. Notice the several qualities of style found in this stanza.

STANZAS IX. and X.

The story of the loves of Burns would fill a volume: his experience certainly made him competent to speak. With this and the following stanza cf. Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, l. 13 and 14 and l. 324–326; and Milton's *L'Allegro*, l. 67 and 68, also stanza 1. Why are these stanzas in pure English?

STANZA XI.

But. Rhet. force? **Porritch.** A porridge made of oatmeal, a well-known Scottish dish. To a melancholy letter, written to his father from Irvine, Dec. 27, 1781, Burns added this doleful postscript: "My meal is nearly out, but I am going to borrow until I get more." **Soupe** = a small quantity of any liquid. **Hawkie** = a cow, exactly, one with a white face. **Hallan** = the partition in the cottage.. **Weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell** = well-kept cheese; **fell** means sharp, "biting." Cf. Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, Canto I., st. xxix. **How 'twas a towmond auld sin' Lint was i' the bell.** How 'twas a twelvemonth old since flax was in blossom.

STANZA XII.

Ha' Bible = hall-Bible. The **ha',** or hall, was the main living-room, and here the family Bible was kept. Cf. Saxon use of the word **hall.** **Lyart haffets** = gray temples (**haffets** = half-heads or temples, sides of the head). **Wales** = chooses. Cf. German, wählen. **Let us worship God.** *Vid.* note introductory to this poem.

STANZA XIII.

Dundee, Martyrs, Elgin. Names of the Scottish tunes, still found in some hymn-books. The choice of descriptive adjectives is particularly happy. **Beets** = adds (fuel to the fire). This sweeping condemnation of Italian music savors of prejudice. Do Scotch hymns or Italian music more closely resemble the song of birds?

STANZA XIV.

This stanza is a fair synopsis of the poetry of the Old Testament. *Vid.* Gen. xv., Ex. xvii., 1 Sam. xiv. and xxvii., Job iii. **Or rapt Isaiah's wild,** etc. Cf. Pope's *Messiah*, l. 5–8. **Seers.** The prophets.

STANZA XV.

In this stanza we have the essence of New Testament history. **Sped** = succeeded. **Great Bab'lon's doom.** *Vid.* Rev. xviii. Protestants say that in this vision John foresees the fall of the Papal church. Babylon's injustice and oppression were notorious. For this reason the word is sometimes used in the Bible as a generic figurative term for injustice. Such is Burns's use of the word here. Cf. v. 2 of Rev. xviii.

STANZA XVI.–XVIII.

Springs exulting, etc. Carelessly quoted from Pope's *Windsor Forest*. How does the line read? More such simple-minded cotters would make the world much better. Simplicity gives most content, and a simple life cherishes a simple faith. This spirit was characteristic of Burns's life, and finds frequent expression, both in his longer poems and in his songs. Hollow display, mere pretence, were abhorrent to him. The praise of rustic piety manifested in unpretending worship is an unconscious eulogy of himself. Cf. "Address to Domestic Happiness," Cowper's *Task*, Book III., l. 41 ff.

With this description of the devotion of the cotter's family, cf. Wordsworth's lines on the Wanderer's Religious Home, *Excursion*, Book I., l. 110–119.

From scenes like these old SCOTIA's grandeur springs. Cf. Bacon's Essay *Of Great Place;* Goldsmith, *Deserted Village;* Thomson's *Seasons* (Summer), l. 423 and 424; *vid.* also Stanza I. of *For a' that and a' that.* **An honest man,** etc. . . . From whom quoted? **Certes,** like **meed** and **ween** in the first stanza, is an O. E. word. What poet was Burns imitating? **The cottage leaves the palace far behind.** Is the figure good?

Cf. with this stanza Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Canto VI., stanza ii.; Cowper's *Task*, Book V., l. 742 ff. **And O may Heaven,** etc. Read Goldsmith's anathema on luxury, *Deserted Village*, l. 385–394. **That streamed through great, unhappy Wallace' heart.** Later changed to **That streamed through Wallace's undaunted heart.** In what respect is the change an improvement? From his

earliest years Burns held this Scottish hero in the deepest veneration. Writing to a friend he said: "The story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest." For a concise account of Wallace, *vid.* Anderson's *Gen. Hist.*, p. 360. With this stanza cf. l. 405 *ad fin.* of the *Deserted Village;* also Thomson's *The Seasons* (Summer), l. 1603–1619. Burns, as poet, has a three-fold character; i.e., personal, national, universal. Can you illustrate such description from this poem? An incident, said to have occurred during the "Border Tour," adds to the impressiveness of this prayer for Scotia. As Burns and his companion, Mr. Robert Ainslee, crossed the Tweed, and set foot on English soil, the poet, with bared head, repeated with impassioned voice the two concluding stanzas of this poem.

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